

MEDIEVAL INTERVENTIONS

Demonic Possession,
Vulnerability,
and Performance in
Medieval French Drama

ANDREEA MARCULESCU



Just like the modern hysteric, a figure that catalyzes clinical vocabularies confirming medieval theological anxieties, the demoniac has been considered an “anomalous” and “abnormal” manifestation of womanhood. Incapable of self-governance, both linguistic and corporeal, the medieval possessed is placed in the category of the pathological. The symptoms of possession are part of a multilayered discourse coined by medieval theologians, authors of *exempla*, hagiographers, and natural philosophers. The subjectivity of the demoniac becomes, thus, a fetishistic construction which allows medieval male intellectuals to ponder questions about demons, the supernatural, and the human body. *Demonic Possession, Vulnerability, and Performance in Medieval French Drama* advocates for an affective and ethical framework of reading the vocabularies of possession in which the demoniac’s convulsions, contortions, shrieks of pain, and snapshots of disarticulated language are not conceptualized as “pathological” but as a model of intercorporeality built around modalities of sensuous exchange between the bodies of both the possessed and of those whom she comes in contact with. Can we think of a corporeal agency of the “anomalous” body of the possessed independent of reason and articulated language? What happens when such distorted bodies enter zones of visual, haptic, and aural contact with abled-bodied individuals? Can possession be considered as a producer of a sensuous type of knowledge that alters the way sovereign subjects perceive themselves? Taking as primary sources a series of late-medieval French Passion Plays and hagiographical plays authored by poetic and religious figures such as Arnoul Gréban, André de la Vigne, Eustache Mercadé, and Jean Michel, this book argues that the lyrical capaciousness of the plays as forms of narrativized poetics allows us to understand demonic possession as a series of bodily narratives of pain, of healing, of witnessing, and, ultimately, of vulnerability.

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MEDIEVAL INTERVENTIONS

New Light on Traditional Thinking

Stephen G. Nichols

General Editor

Vol. 4

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Marculescu, Andreea, author.
Title: Demonic possession, vulnerability, and performance in
medieval French drama / Andreea Marculescu.
Description: New York: Peter Lang, 2018.
Series: Medieval interventions: new light on traditional thinking; vol. 4
ISSN 2376-2683 (print) | ISSN 2376-2691 (online)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017044488 | ISBN 978-1-4331-3077-9 (hardback: alk. paper)
ISBN 978-1-4331-5063-0 (ebook pdf) | ISBN 978-1-4331-5064-7 (epub)
ISBN 978-1-4331-5065-4 (mobi)
Subjects: LCSH: Demonic possession. | Demonic possession—France.
Women—History—Middle Ages, 500–1500.
French drama—To 1500—History and criticism.
Classification: LCC BF1555 .M37 2018 | DDC 133.4/26082—dc23
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017044488>
DOI 10.3726/b12231

Bibliographic information published by **Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**.
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the “Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie”; detailed bibliographic data are available
on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de/>.

© 2018 Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York
29 Broadway, 18th floor, New York, NY 10006
www.peterlang.com

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Contents

	<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
	<i>Introduction</i>	1
1	Medieval Theologians Facing the Possessed	27
2	The Voice of the Possessed	57
3	Sensorial Encounters with the Possessed	81
4	Effacing Demons: Storytelling, Healing, and Ritual	101
	<i>Conclusion</i>	127
	<i>Bibliography</i>	131
	<i>Index</i>	141

Acknowledgments

Writing a scholarly monograph involves a very great deal of solitary work. Yet I would not have been able to accomplish this project without the help, advice, and encouragement of my academic mentors and friends from both Europe and the US. This monograph has grown from my dissertation which I defended at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore in 2011. I am very grateful to my advisor, Stephen Nichols, for the unique ways in which he has always known how to challenge me intellectually and professionally. His mentorship over the years has been central to my formation as a scholar. I also wish to thank him for welcoming my work into the series he is directing at Peter Lang. At Johns Hopkins, Walter Stephens has been a great mentor from whose knowledge on medieval and early-modern demonology I have benefited tremendously. Other faculty members at Hopkins—Elena Russo, Wilda Anderson, Bill Egginton, Gabrielle Spiegel, and Herbert Kessler—have inspired and challenged my work in significant ways. At Harvard, Virginie Greene has been a constant source of support and inspiration. Her optimism and sense of practicality are contagious. I am grateful to Jane Newman, a wonderful pedagogue, scholar, and mentor, who has made me feel extremely welcomed in the UC Irvine community and shown a great deal interest in my work. At University of Oklahoma, Sufang Ng, Kenneth Hodges, and Joyce Coleman have shown a great sense of hospitality and provided priceless advice about the structure of this book.

I am also grateful to Lupe Davidson for being an understanding chair who has accommodated my needs to finish this book manuscript. My mentors in Europe have been quintessential in shaping my background as a medievalist. I am particularly grateful to Gabor Klaniczay (Central European University), Marco Mostert, René Stuip, and Rob Meens at Utrecht University. I would like to thank Piroska Nagy in particular for the help and interest she has taken in my work.

Various people have commented certain portions of this project and offered advice about it at various stages: Moshe Sluhovsky, Michael Meere, Kathleen Long, Noah Guynn, Jody Enders, Mary Franklin-Brown, Irit Kleiman, Darwin Smith, Jelle Koopmans, Carol Symes, Sylvaine Guyot, and Janet Beizer. Accomplishing this project would not have been possible without the fellowships and travel grants I have received in these past few years. I have been fortunate enough to have been awarded a fellowship from the American Council for Learned Societies which granted my time and resources to accomplish the research for the monograph. A travelling grant from the Medieval Academy of America has allowed me the necessary resources to present my work at various international conferences. The initial research for this project was facilitated by a short-term fellowship from the Singleton Center at Johns Hopkins University. I thank Cristopher Celenza for his support. I have presented parts of Chapter 3 at Columbia Seminar on Affect Studies. I am grateful for the feedback I have received from the conference participants. Portions of Chapter 2 have already been published as “The Voice of the Possessed in Late Medieval French Theater,” in *Voice and Voicelessness in the Middle Ages*, ed. Irit Kleiman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 139–52. I am grateful to Palgrave Macmillan for allowing me to include this article in my monograph. I would also like to thank the editorial team at Peter Lang for their patience and support.

My fellow colleagues and friends have been a real joy to talk to about both “work” and “life.” Special thanks for a good conversation and a good laugh to Karen and Chris Manna, Valentina Denzel, Doreen Denski, Andy Pigot, Tania Zampini, Julie Roy, Diana Jorza, Stephanie Goyette. I particularly thank Emine Fisek for her camaraderie. Her expertise as a performance studies scholar together with her kindness and humor have been invaluable. In Paris and Brussels, Dana Herskovits and Raluca Painter, respectively, have offered me hospitality and friendship. In Bucharest, my dear friends Adriana Teculescu, Monica Cozac, Elena Alexe have helped me whenever I needed it. Special thanks to Anima and Diwpen Baishya and Kapil (Bronti) Baishya and Darshana Sreedhar Mini, my extended family in India and the US, who have welcomed me in their lives. My good thoughts are also directed towards my aunt, Rodica Guran, who has

always supported me in my choices and whose story of deflecting Romania in the summer of 1973 to embrace political exile I hope to write about one day.

Last but not least, this monograph would have not been possible at all without the constant love, support, and trust that my parents—Mariana and Gabriel-Radu Marculescu—have always shown to me no matter the circumstances. My partner, Amit Baishya, has surrounded me with his love, humor, encouragement, immense erudition, and gastronomic talent making the whole writing experience much easier. His help has been invaluable from discussing with me theoretical complexities about biopolitics and secularism to correcting my “Frenchified”/“Romanian” English and commenting extensively on my prose. Our black lab girl, Sushi, has made my days lighter and filled them with joy. I dedicate this monograph to my parents, to Amit, and to Sushi.

Introduction

In Western thought, the possessed has an identity as a subject that does not have the property over her speech and, hence, lacks the cognitive capacity to say who she is. Paraphrasing Arthur Rimbaud's idea regarding the ontological impossibility of command over one's own mode of thinking¹ ("on me pense" [I am thought] as the poet says) Michel de Certeau² states that the possessed is always spoken for or about but never speaks herself. Rimbaud's "on me pense" [I am thought], argues de Certeau, becomes the demoniac's "on me parle" [I am spoken]. Two mediums are involved in such locutionary acts that efface the identity of the possessed as producer of such idioms: demons, and those who assess both her linguistic performance and her convulsions and catatonic states. Indeed, demons "speak" through the possessed subjects and render her discourse "incoherent" and "incomprehensible," while the masculine authorities consisting of theologians, judges, or doctors assess, classify, and analyze her idiom and convulsionary bodily states and formulate diagnoses. Michel Foucault³ argues that the epistemological impetus of scrutinizing the identity of the possessed through the theological and the medical gaze leads to an inscription of the possessed within the realm of the pathological. This means that the demoniac becomes part of disciplinary discursive techniques through which her body enters a space where all symptoms of possession—ranging from the disarticulated voice, convulsions of the flesh,

to catatonic states—become an object of analytical scrutiny. If in premodern Europe, such scrutiny was largely the prerogative of the theologians, starting with the 18th century, argues Foucault, the convulsionary flesh of the possessed becomes the prototype for madness and other nervous illnesses that culminate in the “invention of hysteria,” to use Georges Didi-Huberman’s turn of phrase.⁴ This is a narrative teleology—from possession to hysteria—that first needs to be presented and confronted if the possessed has to emerge from within the folds of discourse as an insurgent subject. This teleological approach will be contrasted with other ways of conceptualizing the bodies of the possessed formulated by medieval historians and scholars. However, both teleological and (a variety of) historical approaches efface the actual corporeality of the possessed. Reinscribing the effaced body of the possessed will be the first task of this introductory chapter.

Indeed, the 19th century witnesses the flourishing of a complex body of medical literature on hysteria⁵ in which medical figures of the time analyze psycho-somatic and even moral causes together with potential treatments for hysteria. Among these, Paul Richer (1849–1933), professor of artistic anatomy, his mentor, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893), neurologist at the Salpêtrière,⁶ and Charles Richet (1850–1935), Nobel-prize winner in physiology of medicine in 1913 and president of the French Eugenics Society,⁷ see a direct connection between medieval and early-modern cases of possession and hysteria.⁸ The hysteric’s poses, convulsions, attacks, *attitudes passionnelles* and verbosity find a non-scientific correlation in earlier manifestations of possession. Whereas in the case of pre-modern possessed, it’s the devil that provokes them, in 19th century medical discourse, they are the result of neurological disturbances⁹ diligently analyzed, described, photographed, collected, and transposed into what Didi-Huberman calls “a spectacle of illness.”¹⁰ In it the hysteric becomes not only a pathological and forensic object, but is simultaneously constructed as a “vehicle” that externalize the desires of the gazer, and helps him foreground and legitimize a plethora of scientific questions.¹¹ Within the space of this medical gaze, the persona of the hysteric is reduced to a body of knowledge through which “she fatally interrogated the viewer’s gaze, crudely interrogating the fantasmatic meaning of his “scientific position.”¹² In fact, as Janet Beizer puts it, the hysteric, alienated from her body whose surface is simultaneously captured and produced through painful experiments and medical observations within the parameters of the medical discourse, is a fetishistic object that ventriloquizes the voices of the male figures who examine her.¹³

The claim the 19th century hysteric is a simple avatar of the pre-modern possessed has been problematic for medievalists and early-modernists who have

emphasized the need to interpret earlier acts of possession as part of the pre-modern social and religious concerns. In this respect, Brian Levack finds Jean-Martin Charcot's interpretation of symptoms of demonic possession under the umbrella of hysteria medically vague. Levack claims that hysteria was used to designate many psychoneurotic diseases with different etiologies.¹⁴ Hysteria, argues Levack, is, just like demonic possession, a cultural construct that, nonetheless, can account for "explaining a limited number of symptoms of the possession, preferably those evident when the afflictions began."¹⁵ Indeed, for a series of historians who analyze late medieval and early-modern forms of spirituality, demonic possession is a matter of cultural performance. In displaying the pathological symptoms of possession, the demoniac, Levack points out, follows particular scripts encoded in the religious culture to which they belonged.¹⁶ In a similar vein, Moshe Sluhovsky¹⁷ and, before him, Nancy Caciola¹⁸ argue for the same performative character of demonic possession through which the demoniac conveys a particular social construction of her identity together with the collective assessment that such performance triggers.¹⁹ In this respect, Caciola refers to the body of the demoniac as a cipher that is carefully assessed according to theological and medical discursive strategies regarding the notion of demonic possession.²⁰ What is at stake for medieval authorities, Caciola argues, is to interpret a series of symptoms such as catatonic states, convulsions or contortions as being signs of either demonic or divine possession.²¹

Whether the 19th century hysteric is a medicalized version of the medieval and early-modern possessed is ultimately, in a Foucauldian perspective, a matter of how some forms of knowledge produce particular subjects and how "effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false."²² In other words, to use a Foucauldian vocabulary, the subjectivity of both the hysteric and the possessed are contingent upon particular disciplinary mechanisms which are themselves the product of local and temporal hegemonic narratives.

What they have in common, I argue, is the way in which the figure of the possessed with its avatar, the hysteric, is advanced to legitimize such truths. Just like the 19th century doctors, medievalists and early-modernists place the possessed within a hermeneutic system. The body of the demoniac is objectified and assigned an interpretative value in itself within the space of specific sites of discourse formation such as confessions, trials, demonological and medical treatises. Moreover, the bodily surface of the demoniac "matters" only as long as it conveys theological and medical concerns and anxieties centered around various issues such as discernment of spirits, psycho-physiological differences between

males and females, the material presence of demons and angels and their interactions with humans. In this respect, Amy Hollywood, taking inspiration from psychoanalysis and feminist thought,²³ reaches a similar conclusion that Janet Beizer and Didi-Huberman do when asserting that the hysteric is a male fetishistic construction.²⁴ Hollywood argues that the body of the medieval female mystic/demoniac is a site over which opposed discourses between the clergy and the laity, orthodoxy and heresy are inscribed.²⁵ The mystical body, points out Hollywood, would help confirm male clerical assumptions and subjectivities about gender difference and theological knowledge. Nevertheless, argues Hollywood, the same bodies, rendered powerless, different, and exposed to an omnipresent other, have the potential to be threatening to male subjectivity and authority.²⁶

In fact, the later Middle Ages witnesses a proliferation of theological works which coin, at times, forensic methods and vocabularies to counteract such threatening impetuses by discerning how certain bodily symptoms are signs for divine and not demonic possession. This strict control over the somatic reactions that female saints, mystics, demoniacs, and even witches display lead to what Dylan Elliott calls the pathologization of female spirituality²⁷ involving the “naturalization of the supernatural.”²⁸ What is at stake here, argues Elliott, is the ingrained physiological difference between men and women whose bodies are porous, softer, more humid and, hence, humorally different.²⁹ This particular constitution makes them prone to imagination and, thus, to dangerous, that is, demonic, supernatural influence.³⁰ Therefore, the nature of such influence had to be filtered through the grid of criteria derived from theological writings about the nature of spirits, the way they impact bodies and faculty of the souls such as imagination, and the manner in which those being in states of rapture, trances, or mystical ecstasy report to male confessors about these experiences. Jean Gerson (d. 1429), Henry of Langestein (d. 1397), and Peter d’Ailly (d. 1420) are among the theologian-scholars who, inspired by the scholastic method of *inquisitio* and *questio*, designed vocabularies and frameworks to assess and, ultimately, control female spirituality.³¹ Starting with the 14th century, the possessed is captured within this network of “clerical quibbles,” to use Elliott’s phrase,³² in which her condition is dissected and forensically examined in order to establish whether her speech and physical symptoms fall into the category of demonic or rather divine revelations.

The other direction in which the pathological disturbance that the possessed generates is recuperated is to advance theses about theological concerns regarding lay devotion, piety, and instruction. In this respect, Michel Bailey has pointed out that a significant number of witchcraft treatises aimed not only at explicating

the nature of demons and their sexual commerce with humans but engaged with instructing the laity about various forms of religious practices to counteract and prevent such demonic attacks.³³ Such is the case of Johannes Nider (d. 1438), a witchcraft theorist and one of the major participants in the Council of Basel (1431–1449) which, among other prerogatives, started criminalizing witchcraft on a systematic scale. In his treatise, *The Anthill (Formicarius)*, he discusses various cases of demonic possession and suggests various normative devotional practices (making the sign of the cross, confessing, or praying) that would prevent or attenuate the invasion of demons upon humans' bodies. The various examples of possession that Nider discusses (that is, of females, in their great majority) are portrayed as performers of bad Christian practices unaware of a Catholic doxa and, hence, in need of a theological corrective voice for guidance. More recently, the same systemic need for guidance and surveillance from the part of a clerical figure has been made the object of a monograph by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and dedicated to Ermine de Reims, a 15th century French female mystic suffering at times of demonic attacks.³⁴ Ermine, argues Blumenfeld-Kosinski, follows already established models of late-medieval female sainthood in which visions and other spiritual gestures or somatic manifestations as a result of demonic or divine possession have to be cleared out and explained with the help of a male confessor.³⁵ Ermine is part of such a "holy couple," as Blumenfeld-Kosinski labels this spiritual relationship,³⁶ with Jean le Graveur, an Augustinian friar from Reims, as her guiding voice who would translate and explain to her all her demonic attacks while educating her about the type of devotional behavior she needs to adopt.³⁷

All these approaches assume a strict ontological demarcation between the convulsionary body of the possessed or that of the mystic and the sovereign gaze of the theologian whether an inquisitor, confessor, doctor, theologian, or even hagiographer. From Lacanian psychoanalysis we know that the "gaze" is something that distances the subject from the object of seeing. Or, as a psychoanalyst like Teresa Brennan puts it,³⁸ the subject assimilates all that is other to oneself viewing the world from its own standpoint.³⁹ The possessed, just like the hysteric, have been envisaged precisely from such a perspective. The gaze, religious or secular, conceives them as passive carriers of other's desires. I claim though that the somatic signs on the surface of their body require interpretation and validation. In this methodological framework, the theologian (just like the doctor) epitomizes the ableist fantasy of the autonomous, sovereign, and self-contained subject who puts a strict demarcation between self and Other, mind and body whereas the possessed offers a blatant counter-example of such narrative. Incapable of self-governance, a condition manifested through disarticulated language

and convulsionary gestures, the demoniac is ontologically unable of operating such distinction between self and Other. She is essentially an open entity entering into a relation of dominance first with the demons that inflict violence upon her and, second, with the theologians who, as we have seen, objectify and appropriate her persona according to their own agenda.

Nevertheless, from feminist philosophers such as Elizabeth Grosz⁴⁰ we learn that bodies are open entities that are not necessarily in a relation of subordination to a sovereign other, but capable of relating to others at a sensorial and corporeal level. Building on Merleau-Ponty's understanding of body as lived experience, Grosz argues against Foucauldian disciplinary discourses that create particular types of subjectivities. Conversely, for Grosz subjectivity is "always necessarily embodied, corporeally constituted."⁴¹ Similarly, I ask whether the demoniac's subjectivity can be understood in disassociation from its objectification by hegemonic theological and medical discourses, and reconfigured rather within the realm of embodiment. In other words, can we think of the demoniac's ontological openness towards the gaze of the Other less in terms of a relation of sovereignty and more as a matter of corporeal interrelatedness? If all bodies, as Grosz points out, "are able to move, to initiate and undertake actions,"⁴² how does the "anomalous," "wrong," and hence pathologized body of the possessed affect the normative body's fantasies of autonomy and containment?

A first step in answering these questions is to think of signs of possession less as symptoms per se corresponding to a theological agenda or to a medical etiology (although, to a certain extent, possession cannot be understood outside such specialized languages) and more as affective corporeal flashes that put so-called "sovereign" and "anomalous" bodies in zones of visual, aural, and tactile contact. My understanding of "affective" here has been informed by the ways in which disability studies scholars such as Tobin Siebers⁴³ and queer and Affect Studies theorists like Mel Chen⁴⁴ and Brian Massumi,⁴⁵ respectively, refer to the potential of the body to possess a certain unconscious visceral perception and autonomy that allows it to affect and be affected. In this sense, this book advocates for an *affective* framework of reading the vocabularies of possession in which the demoniac's convulsions, contortions, shrieks of pain, and snapshots of disarticulated language are not conceptualized as "pathological" but as a model of intercorporeality built around sites of sensuous exchange among bodies both of the possessed and of those whom she comes in contact with. Placing the possessed within the paradigm of affective interrelatedness also requires a reconsideration of her ontological status. My monograph is thus an ethical recalibration of the possessed from that of an "abnormal" subject

produced by the coalescence of different discourses to that of a “vulnerable” one. Following the etymological root of the word *vulnus*, feminist philosophers like Adriana Cavarero⁴⁶ have underlined that the category of vulnerability designates both wounding and caring.⁴⁷ As a wounded body, Cavarero argues, the subject is unilaterally exposed to pain and suffering. Yet, this suffering body can also be cared for by others. Hence the need, Judith Butler points out in *Frames of War*,⁴⁸ for frames of care that recognize the existence of particular vulnerable bodies.⁴⁹ Similarly, this monograph aims at capturing the possessed within this double perspective both as a wounded body exposed to pain inflicted by the presence of demons inside her body and as a subject that enters economies of care and interconnection with others. As I mentioned earlier, my goal is to shift the discourse from objectification to a possible insurgent subjectivity that persists in the minutiae of the everyday and the ordinary.

Drama: Language and Corporeality

Where do we look for evidence of intercorporeal relationships in the medieval corpus? A particularly rich domain that allows us to capture the vulnerability of the medieval possessed both in her exposure to violence and within various frameworks of care is that of late-medieval theater. Surprisingly neglected in scholarly discussions about the nature of medieval demonic possession which analyzed representations of possession in medieval miracles, scholastic treatises, saintly *vitas*, liturgical sources, trials of canonization,⁵⁰ this corpus of texts encompasses a model of corporeality deriving from its own linguistic and performative regimes. These formal characteristics allow us to capture nodal zones of contact between the vulnerable possessed and the other characters who witness the spectacle of her objectification.

The corpus that *Demonic Possession, Vulnerability, and Performance in Medieval French Drama* is focused on consists of Passion Plays, centered on the public life of Christ and the scourges inflicted on him, and hagiographical plays which follow the life of a particular saint. Composed and staged throughout the French territories during the 15th and early 16th century, the plays are also known as mystery plays even if in their medieval denomination they are designated as *jeu par personnages*, *mystere*, or *miracle*. Graham Runalls⁵¹ makes a classification of Passion Plays and tabulates several “family” resemblances that circulated in a particular geographical area of France: Anjou, Picardie, Hainaut, Savoy and Île-de-France.⁵² The plays that originated from this last area were copied in luxury

manuscripts and/or printed and disseminated in most of French territories. Runnalls called them *les grandes Passions* (the great Passion Plays).⁵³ The first person to commence this “tradition” was Eustache Mercadé (ca. 1380–1440), provost of Dampierre, who in 1420–1430, wrote *Passion d’Arras*⁵⁴ consisting of about 25,000 lines. Arnoul Gréban (ca. 1420–ca. 1471) continues Mercadé’s textual tradition and, around 1450, composes a 30,000 line *Mystère de la Passion*.⁵⁵ In 1486, a member of the Faculty of Medicine from Angers, Jean Michel, adapts Gréban’s text⁵⁶ into a new Passion Play,⁵⁷ of about 30,000 verses, that was printed and disseminated in a variety of early printed editions, both *deluxe* and “popular,”⁵⁸ at the end of the 15th century and throughout the 16th century. These editions were also employed in staging dramatic representations in other northern French cities such as Mons or Valenciennes.⁵⁹ The saints’ plays follow a similar structure. They are several thousand lines long and are centred on the life of a male or female saint whose life and miracles enter the register of *imitatio Christi*. The hagiographical plays do not belong to one single family of texts like the Passion Plays but are productions in verse of older prose hagiographies corresponding to various individual Catholic saints. Such is the case with *Mystère de saint Remi* based on *Vita Remigii* authored by Hincmar of Reims (d. 882), archbishop of Reims,⁶⁰ and *Mystère de saint Martin*.⁶¹ The latter is authored by Andrieu de la Vigne who versified a hagiography in Latin titled *Vita sancti Martini* that Sulpicius Severus (d. 425) wrote in 397 AD. Just like the Passion Plays, the hagiographic mystery plays were staged by both secular and ecclesiastical groups in various urban and rural areas in France and, therefore, played an important socio-cultural role in the making of the identity of various late-medieval local communities and socio-economic groups ranging from the clergy to the Parisian guilds. The plays display normative Catholic, proto-nationalist, and heterosexual narratives overtly. Simultaneously, they also stage scenarios of exclusion for those population categories who counteract collective fantasies of the “good” French Catholic national community: Jews, Muslims, individuals involved in homoerotic acts, witches, or females who do not confirm to expected models of domesticity.⁶²

The dramatic scenario in such plays is, therefore, galvanized by the efforts of sacred figures defending Christian Catholic subjects whose spiritual universe is constantly threatened by non-Christian figures such as Jews or pagans, or other figures whose menace is harder to define, such as public executioners. However, in comparison to the other characters that animate the mystery plays—such as devils, saints, apostles, Jews, angels, or Jesus Christ himself—possessed characters

are relatively less numerous. The scenes of possession are part of a series of miracles that Jesus or a particular saint performs. Thus, just like the blind, the leper, the physically impaired, the possessed enters the circuit of disabled, “imperfect” bodies⁶³ who are part of the collective networks of care. In the Passion Plays, the model for the possessed character is based on a scene taken from the New Testament, namely Matthew 15: 21–28. In that biblical episode, in one of the miracles that Jesus performs before reaching Jerusalem, he chases demons out of a possessed girl at the insistence of her mother, the Canaanite woman. Mercadé, Gréban, and Jean Michel all develop this episode in a way that focuses on the speech that the Canaanite woman’s daughter—called *la fille desmoniacle*, “the demoniac girl”—utters while being vexed by demons. The hagiographical plays are dominated by a similar category of demoniacs who, like the Canaanite woman’s daughter, are then exorcised by saintly figures inspired by Christ’s miracles and persona. In both the hagiographic plays and the Passion Plays, the exorcism and implicit healing of the possessed are preceded by a fully-developed, on-stage presentation of the somatic sensations and psychological traces that demons produce while vexing the possessed. These scenes show how vocabularies of possession are reconfigured in the domain of the quotidian, and also enable ethical encounters with forms of alterity.

In terms of content, the plays expand on biblical material whether deriving from the Vulgate or from vernacular translations and, in the case of hagiographical plays, incorporate various episodes from saints’ *vitas*. In addition to these sources, the plays include materials from biblical commentaries such as *Glossa ordinaria*, Nicolas of Lyre’s *Postillae*, Pseudo-Anselm’s *Dialogus Beatae Mariae*, Peter the Chanter’s *Historia scholastica*, religious encyclopedias like *Elucidarium* and *Speculum historiale*, hagiographic works such as Jacob of Voragine’s *Golden Legend*, and devotional ones like *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, *Speculum Historiale*, or Ludolph of Saxony’s *Vita Christi*.⁶⁴ The demoniacs and the scenes of possession are therefore infused with theological and, at times, medical vocabulary and material. When they morph into mystery plays such prescribed discourses about possession are altered by the rhetorical and performative regime cultivated by the plays. I argue that through such acts of transfer of knowledge, the possessed enters an ambiguous milieu, a gray zone in which her subjectivity is not exclusively produced and imposed by a theological or medical gaze. In contrast, mystery plays both in their formal aspects as poetry and their modes of dissemination as theater encapsulate demonic possession as lived experience centered on the suffering body of the demoniac and its agential dimension as a vulnerable subject in Cavarero’s sense.

Mystery Plays and the Medieval Anti-theatrical Prejudice

What is the specificity of the medieval dramatic medium which allows for such model of corporeality? Medieval theater is a multilayered construct, the definition of which is difficult to capture within one explanatory framework. Unlike the 17th century dramatic tradition, which emerged in the midst of a flourishing theoretical debate about the role of theater, medieval drama, despite its significant output, did not produce such sustained theoretical attention. Yet fragments of medieval dramatic theory do exist even if some of them are not intended to function as a theoretical support for dramatic performances as such. Considerations about the aesthetic and linguistic structure of French mystery plays occur in a lyric anthology, *Le Jardin de Plaisance*, that the Parisian printer Antoine Vérard (1485–1512) published in 1501.⁶⁵ Historians of the book like Jane M. Taylor⁶⁶ advance the hypothesis that *Le Jardin* was designed to fashion the taste of early 16th century readers for various genres of late-medieval lyrics such as rondeaux or ballades authored by iconic French poets like Villon, Eustache Deschamps, and Alain Chartier. Vérard's anthology opens with a poetic treatise written in verses and titled *Instructif de la seconde rhétorique*, the aim of which is to educate the readers of the *Jardin* about the technicalities of poetry and, thus, to facilitate their comprehension of the poems included in the anthology. As the title indicates, the *Instructif* belongs to the category of treatises detailing the poetic principles of composing in the vernacular.⁶⁷ An early 20th century philologist like Ernest Langlois⁶⁸ depicts several such works: some written anonymously (*Traité de l'art de rhétorique*, *Traité de rhétorique*) and some even authored by mystery plays' writers like Jean Molinet such as his *Art de rhétorique*. Just like these other documents, the *Instructif* contains an inventory of rhetorical figures and patterns of rhymes and stanzas; but unlike other *arts rhétoriques*, it provides a brief description of various literary genres ranging from *chroniques* and *hystoires* to mystery plays.⁶⁹

It is in the 10th and last chapter of the *Instructif* that we find information about the formal characteristics of different types of late-medieval theater: moralities (4 stanzas), farces (3 stanzas), and mystery plays (15 stanzas). Theater historians⁷⁰ unanimously agree that the *Instructif* does not provide a normative model of what theater should be, but does nevertheless reflect the theatrical experience of a spectator familiar with both the content and the modes of performance of mystery plays. What is the mode of representation that mystery plays should ideally convey? Following an Aristotelian and Horatian framework, the *Instructif* postulates that the “beaulx misteres” need to be pleasant (“aux gens delictables”)

and follow the rules of *congruentia* meaning that each character should perform in accordance to their social status and gender: “Item considerer convient//Les faiz et estaz des seigneurs (...) Tant aux dames et damoiselles//Et aux gens selon leurs grandeurs.”⁷¹ [Item it is worth attributing the events to the status of gentlemen (...) [the same goes for] ladies and young ladies and for people according to their social status]. The *Instructif* is rather precise when it comes to the rhetorical specificity of the theatrical language which needs to be decorated with certain ornaments in the form of lyrical insertions consisting of poems in *formes fixes*. In fact, there is an affective logic through which they can be inserted in the text as their role is to formally mark particular emotions or emotional moments: “Item de beaulx et piteulx laiz//L’on doit orner regretz et plainctes //Du louenges de beaulx virlaiz (...) En telz lieux plus sortables soient // Qu’en d’autres places”⁷² [Item chagrin and lamentations must be embellished with beautiful and compassionate *lais*, praises with beautiful virlaiz (...) And in certain places they are more appropriate than in others]. Moreover, the *Instructif* specifies that mystery plays must offer accurate transpositions of facts and that these transpositions do not necessarily need to be in prose or verse. However, their language must be comprehensible and engage the spectators ethically and aesthetically: “beaulx misteres//Qui soient aux gens delictables (...) Vrayes translacions entieres//Selon les faiz sans rime ou prose//L’on doit par ornees manieres//En brief traicter une grant chose”⁷³ [beautiful mystery plays that are pleasant to people (...) True full translations of events neither in verse or prose (and these translations) must be rhetorically adorned and refer to an important event in a succinct way]. From these rather brief considerations, mystery plays seem to operate within a classical type of poetics in which the aesthetic pleasure and a certain formal rhetorical purity based on the principle of *congruentia* are constant prerogatives.⁷⁴

As theater historians have remarked,⁷⁵ the actual plays reflect some of these features only partially in the sense that Passion Plays and some of the hagiographic plays illustrate a hybrid mixing of registers. Thus a religious themed play such as André de la Vigne’s *Mystère de saint Martin* encompasses texts belonging to the comic genre such as farces or portray characters who do not perform according to their own social status.⁷⁶ But in other respects, the plays include, echoing the prescriptive theses advanced by the *Instructif*, lyric insertions as *formes fixes* consisting of rondeaux or ballades, the role of which is to illustrate important dramatic moments in the text or to convey strong emotions such as the grief or sorrow of the characters. The scenes of Christ’s scourges, the prayers that Virgin Mary, Jesus, or those afflicted by different forms of suffering making addresses to God, and acts of hate speech from the Jews toward Jesus and from Christians

towards Jesus are all expressed through the use of *formes fixes*.⁷⁷ The scenes of possession themselves follow a similar model in which the rondeaux or ballades convey a particular emotional range, not only from the part of the demoniac but also from those who witness manifestations of demonic possession. For instance, the long scene of possession from *Mystère de saint Remi* opens with a ballade (vv. 4809–4844) in which Prolice, the mother of Fleurie, the possessed girl, conveys her feelings of grief, sadness, and despair towards the altered corporeality of her daughter whose body is assailed by demons. In *Mystère de l'Institution de l'Ordre des Freres Prescheurs*, in the scene of exorcism that saint Regnault performs over Le Convers, the possessed, some of the elements of the rondeau such as the refrain mark the demoniac's sense of bodily abandonment to demons and, simultaneously, show how exorcism, although a brutal form of torture, re-inscribes a defiled body within a revived Christian circuit:

S. Regault: Tout partout il y a [remede]:

Frappés fort!

Le Convers: Haro, à la mort!

S Regnault: C'est le commandement de Dieu!

Le Convers: Hau, diables, venés à mon confort!

S. Regault: Frappés fort!

Le Convers: Haro, à la mort!

Je cuide estre le plus fort:

Bellement, ce n'est point de jeu!

S. Regault: Frappés fort!

Le Convers: Haro, à la mort!

S Regnault: C'est le commandement de Dieu! [vv. 3666–3674].

[Saint Regnault: He is afflicted everywhere. Hit hard! Le Convers: Haro, to death! Saint Regnault: It's what God ordered! Le Convers: Hey, devils, come to help me! Saint Regnault: Hit hard! Le Convers: Haro, to death! I think I am the strongest: Gently, this is not a game! Saint Regnault: Hit hard! Le Convers: Haro, to death! Saint Regnault: It's God's order!]

In addition to the *formes fixes*, the emotional range of the plays is also characterized by a formal feature that the *Instructif* does not specifically mention, but is nevertheless central to the way the plays are composed. Without exception, the *mystères* are written in a type of verse—the octosyllabic couplet with simple rhymes (*à rimes plates*)—common to courtly romances, chansons de geste and other medieval genres. Mystery plays display hence an interesting framework: their content derives from sacred narratives or didactic and encyclopedic thought written in prose but their form is prosodic. A continental drama scholar, Claude Thiry, calls this compositional principal *poétique de l'entredoux*, a mix of narrative

material and lyric insertions.⁷⁸ This formalist dramatic poetics has a particular impact upon the actual content of the plays and, at the same time, confers them a certain ethical dimension. Indeed, the versification allows for the existence of “mnemonic rhymes” which Edmond Faral defined as a type of rhyme that helps the actor memorize the text: the last line pronounced by a character rhymes with the first one performed by the next one.⁷⁹ But in addition to being a performative device, the same rhyme helps creating *découpages* in the dramatic text which encompass narrative interpolations, lyric insertions, or the presence of different tones in the speech of the characters.⁸⁰ It is within these lyric-narrative interstices that the scenes of demonic possession are performed. For instance, in the *Passion Plays* the short biblical episode based on the Gospel of Matthew in which Jesus heals the Canaanite woman’s daughter is significantly expanded. In the New Testament we read:

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. [Matthew 15: 21–28]

In Grèban’s *Mystère de la Passion*, the same episode is covered in more than 130 lines (vv. 12229–12360) in which the daughter of the Canaanite woman articulates how the act of possession takes place and which parts of her body are under attack by the devil: “Plus de cent deables sont flouris // au sanglant fons de ma cervelle” (vv. 12231–12232) [More than one hundred devils are blooming at the bloody bottom of my brain]. The mother and Ysore, the demoniac’s guardian, lament over manifestations of possessions and vocalize their feelings of distress while they look for means of care to alleviate the pain of the demoniac: “La Chananee: Veez cy bien mos pour moy fermer // en desesperence mortelle // Ysore: Maitresse, la nouvelle est telle // que Jhesus, ce prophete saint, // en qui tant de puissance maint, // vient visiter ceste contree; // se la chose luy fust montree, // il la guerist, n’en doubtiez pas” (vv. 12275–12282) [The Canaanite Woman: Here is trouble to make me drawn into despair // Ysore: My lady, the news is such that

Jesus, this saintly prophet, who has a lot of power, has just visited this land; if we had shown him the girl, you can be sure that he would have healed her]. Moreover, the silent characters in the initial narrative become visible, and their voices are captured within the poetic structure of the plays.

In fact, the poetic aspect of mystery plays impacts not only their principles of composition but also the type of knowledge and affect transmitted through these texts. In this respect, medievalists have underlined the epistemological difference between prose and poetry in the Middle Ages.⁸¹ While the former legitimizes knowledge by claiming impersonality, transparency, and pretension to being exhaustive and self-explanatory, poetry, performed under the auspices of a grammatical first person, is interrelated to the voice, the body, and the personhood of this “I.”⁸² In this way, Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay refer to the “situatedness” of poetry and this feature impacts the knowledge that is conveyed through verse.⁸³ The “objective” narrator of prose is counteracted by poetry’s “discursive interlocutor” who “presents his or her contribution to reflection, learning, or ideology.”⁸⁴ In other words, verse is the ventriloquization of a form of personhood that conveys both the subjectivity of the poetic interlocutor and the emotional and socio-cultural connection that this lyrical ego has with others (love objects, antecedents, audiences, etc.).⁸⁵ The verse structure of the mystery plays cultivates, therefore, a capacious linguistic framework in which possession is appropriated by a lyrical “I” that filters the condition of possession through her or his own subjectivity. Possession becomes thus a matter of “situatedness,” a flexible linguistic space in which the “I” vocalizes her own emotional distress and somatic reactions provoked by the demons that assail her body. Similarly, the same poetic language ingrained in theater allows witnesses of acts of possession such as parents, caregivers, or healers to vocalize their anxieties, corporeal symptoms, or feelings of sympathy towards the demoniac. Finally, the poetic structure impacts the way in which knowledge about demonic possession is re-inscribed in the plays. The formalized vocabularies and frameworks in which possession is conceptualized in didactic literature, biblical narratives and commentaries or scholastic work, all written in prose, are filtered through the emotional and bodily reactions of this “I” that theater as poetry orchestrates.

The particular status of mystery plays as a mixture of narrative material and lyric insertions produces, therefore, a different type of subjectivity for the possessed than the other didactic and philosophical sources in prose. I argue that the poetic “I” legitimizes, in fact, the speech of the demoniac and allows room to express her condition as a vulnerable subject endowed with linguistic and corporeal agency. In other words, if the demoniac’s disarticulated language is one of the

criteria that pathologizes her and confers the doctor or the theologian sovereignty over the ways in which the symptoms and identity of the possessed are mapped out, theatrical language contributes to the depathologization of the demoniac. The lyric insertions and the “I” which orchestrates the verses are all elements which inscribe possession within the realm of subjective emergence and contribute to the exposure of a body that tells its own affective narrative of possession.

Corporeality and Theater

The making of the demoniac’s subjectivity in theater is contingent not only upon language but also upon a specific type of performative model that late-medieval theater foregrounds. References to late-medieval modes of dramatic representation come, paradoxically, from anti-theatrical voices. In France, one such instance emerged from administrative organisms who, in their endeavor to regularize the staging of mystery plays in urban spaces, ended up formulating aesthetic judgments about the nature of mystery plays. In December 1541, the Parliament of Paris promulgated an *arrêt* against a dramatic organization, the *Confrérie de la Pasion*, which had already staged a representation of the *Actes des Apôtres* in the summer of the same year. The history of French theater registered the *arrêt* as the official ban of mystery plays although this is an idea that continental historians of medieval drama⁸⁶ strongly counteracted. Parts of the *arrêt* that refer to the representational style that mystery plays adopted read as following:

tant les entrepreneurs que les joueurs sont gens ignares non lectrés qui ne sçaivent ny A ny B, qui n’ont intelligence non seulement de la sainte escripture ny d’escriptures prophanes. Sont les joueurs [[artisans mecaniques]] comme cordonniers, savetiers, crocheteurs de grève, de toux estatz et ars mechaniques, qui ne sçavent lyre ny escrire, et qui oneques ne furent instruietz ny exercitez en theatres et lieux publicques a faire telz actes. Et d’avantaige n’ont langue diserte ny langage propre ny les accentz de pronounciation decentes ny auchune intelligence de ce qu’ilz dient, tellement que le plus souvent advient que d’un mot ilz en font troys, font poinct ou pause au meilleur d’une proposition (...); dont souvent advient derision et clameur publique dedans le theatre mesmes, tellement que, au lieu de tourner a edification, leur jeu tourne a scandale et derision.⁸⁷

[both those who organize the plays and the actors are ignorant and illiterate individuals who don’t know anything and who don’t understand either the gospels or other secular texts. The actors are artisans such as shoemakers, cobblers, masons, of all social classes and professions who do not know how to read or write and who have never been trained or appointed to stage such plays in theaters or

public spaces. Moreover, they do not possess the rhetorical style or the linguistic skills, nor do they know how to pronounce, nor are they intelligent enough as to understand what they pronounce; in fact, more often than not instead of pronouncing one word they pronounce three, they pause or totally stop in the middle of a sentence (...); they often create derision and public scandal within the theater in such a way that instead of contributing to edification their plays turn into disorder and derision.]

We notice that what comes under close scrutiny here is the fact that sacred narratives lose their meaning and purpose because they are allegedly deformed by actors who are unable to understand and perform the multilayered meaning of certain biblical episodes. In this interpretation, sacred characters allude more to the gesture and language of the profession of those who impersonate them than to their true nature as biblical material. In other words, what the *arrêt* essentially condemns are the centrality of the body and the transfiguration of sacred texts in the realm of the quotidian.⁸⁸ In fact, the regime of corporeality that the plays encouraged seems to have been a constant element in a discourse against medieval theater. In an extensive piece about performance theory, *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, written in Lollard or Wycliffite circles sometimes between 1380 and 1425,⁸⁹ we read that

Many men think that there is no hell of everlasting pain, but that God only threatens us, not to really do it, just as is playing of miraclis in signs and not in deeds [for real].⁹⁰ (...) Just as the weeping that men weep often in such plays [that is, weeping for the Christ's ordeal, my note] is commonly false witnessing because *they love more the liking [pleasure] of their own body* (underlining mine) and the prosperity of the world than liking [pleasing] God and prosperity of virtue in the soul, and therefore, *having more compassion for pain than for sin* (underlining mine), they falsely weep for the lack of bodily prosperity, more than for the lack of spiritual prosperity. (...) And therefore such miraclis playing or the sight of them are not real recreation but false and worldly.⁹¹ (...) But so are not miraclis playing that are *created more to delight men bodily* (underlining mine) than to be books for unlearned men. For miraclis playing [players], just like these apostates, preach for bodily advantage.⁹²

This means that the representational regime within which mystery plays operate is essentially that of the body: of the actors re-enacting Christ's supplication in sign and "not for real" and of the spectators who witness the spectacle of Christ's scourges in which the body is verbally abused, beaten, tortured, burned, dismembered, and, eventually, crucified. As Jody Enders points out, this violence is pedagogically recuperated and produces didactic narratives of personal

redemption.⁹³ But the corollary of such pedagogy of violence is, as we have seen, a strong anti-theatrical prejudice which criticizes the modes of attention towards the body that the plays encourage.

The historian of early English drama, Jill Stevenson,⁹⁴ points out that “the *Tretise* contends that performance emphasizes the flesh that draw the spectator’s attention to her own body and bodily experience.”⁹⁵ Thus the spectators take the performance of sacred narratives as a pretext to become attentive to the materiality of the flesh and to develop empathetic vocabularies and scripts towards physical pain instead of being committed to spiritual issues such as “pleasing God and prosperity of the virtue in the soul.”⁹⁶ The exemplary figure towards which such bodily attention is turned is mainly that of Christ. I argue that this type of attention towards the materiality of the flesh can be detected not only in the context of Jesus’ ordeal but also in the case of the possessed. The scenes of possession in the plays thus expose the demoniac’s supplicated body in pain. In this sense, the dramatic principle of describing in detail the tortured and beaten body of Christ to titillate the senses and bodily boundaries of those watching these scenes, translates into representations of the demoniac as well.

While the archival information is silent in documenting emotional reactions that real spectators might potentially have had towards episodes of possession encompassed in the plays, the textual evidence is quite generous in this respect. Thus, witnesses to demoniac’s vexation develop modes of somatic attention towards their own bodily changes and towards the symptoms of possession that emerge on the skin surface of the possessed. In this way, the demoniac is not a static subject responding to the fetishistic impulses of those gazing at her, as theological or witchcraft treatises construct her, but produces an economy of bodily empathy and sensorial participation in the act of possession. In other words, the ingrained performative principle of the plays as vehicles to “delight men bodily,” as the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* vituperates against, surfaces a collective bodily awareness in connection to the mechanics of possession. The latter is staged not as a *fait accompli* but in all its minutiae and bodily localities: from the moment demons assail the body and vex certain bodily portions and organs up to the act of healing with a focus on collective negotiations and debates about particular frames of care in which the demoniac is to be placed. This way the condition of possession is never the prerogative of only one character but becomes a matter of social and bodily interrelatedness. Medical anthropologists⁹⁷ term such types of bodies that are part of a socio-affective network dyadic bodies in which suffering is both individual—“my pain is my pain”—and shared—“I am pained by your pain.”⁹⁸ The medium to convey the complexities of such dyadic bodies is through

storytelling,⁹⁹ a process in which “the meanings of chronic illness [that affects the dyadic body, my note] are created by the sick person and his or her circle to make over a wild, disordered *natural* occurrence into a more or less domesticated, mythologized, ritually controlled experience.”¹⁰⁰

The Structure of the Book

Demonic Possession, Vulnerability, and Performance in Medieval French Drama follows the trajectory of this dyadic body for which theater opens up a space for storytelling—a process through which the possessed is rendered an agential subject that enters zones of collective tactile, visual, and aural attention. The formal compositional principles of the plays allow the possessed and her community to find vocabularies, metaphors, and narratives¹⁰¹ to ground their pain, anxieties, and modes of care within a flexible dramaturgical structure.¹⁰² In this framework, possession becomes a lived experience contingent upon an etiology that derives, nevertheless, from larger theological and medical discourses that theorize the notion of possession. The first chapter, “Medieval Theologians Facing the Possessed,” analyzes such vocabularies of possession that medieval theologians, natural philosophers, and doctors coin. I argue that whereas in earlier centuries the focus is on the physiology of possession and the ways in which demons interact with humans, at the end of the Middle Ages the demoniac becomes an object of forensic attention from the part of theologians. Their tormented bodies enter an economy of theological validation in which the somatic and psychological signs of possession (shrieks of pain, bodily contortions, catatonic states, or disarticulated language) come under close scrutiny to advance certain theological claims about the discernment of spirits and the nature of female spirituality. The second chapter, “The Voice of the Possessed,” focuses on the interiority of the possessed and the ways in which the plays create linguistic idioms that the demoniac can use in order to allude to her vulnerable dimension both as a subject exposed to demonic violence and as one who can convey the valences of the physical and mental pain provoked by such violence. To analyze the nature of the demoniac’s language I rely on the definition that Paul Zumthor gives to the notion of “vocality” as opposed to “speech.” The latter designates the logocentric version of articulated speech which the demoniac lacks and which represents one of the reasons for which the condition of the possessed enters the domain of pathology. “Vocality,” in exchange, refers to the linguistic and corporal characteristics of the voice as an autographic sign.¹⁰³ In this sense, voice is not ancillary to speech but produces a meaningful

excess even if it is articulated through non-conventional linguistic items such as interjections, words without referents, consistent repetitions of the same word, incoherent rhetorical questions, or isolated deictics. The chapter argues that the voice of the possessed, unrecognizable at the level of speech in formal theological discourses, is recuperated via the heterogeneous and demotic linguistic register that the plays cultivate. The last two chapters of the book, Chapter 3 (“Sensorial Encounters with the Possessed”) and Chapter 4 (“Effacing Demons: Storytelling, Healing, and Ritual”), shift from an “I” who employs a specific linguistic idiom to narrate her symptoms to the same “I” who becomes what Adriana Cavarero calls a “narratable self,” that is “a self, crystalized in the story, [which] is totally constituted by the relations of her appearance to others in the world.”¹⁰⁴ The questions I ask here concern the socio-emotional explanatory frameworks that the others in the demoniac’s intimate domain (parents, caretakers, or members of the communities the possessed belongs to) coin. Chapter 3 explores these affective frameworks and analyzes the immediate corporeal effects that the demoniac’s supplicated body and her linguistic idiom produce on her entourage. I argue that the plays cultivate somatic modes of attention through which the witnesses to the act of possession echo similar sensations to those experienced by the possessed at a kinesthetic, affective, and sensorial level. Such instances show that witnesses are constructed as vulnerable subjects too who enter an economy of intercorporeality through which they are somatically submerged within the pain that demons provoke upon the bodies of the possessed. Chapter 4 focuses on the social modes of attention that the pained body of the possessed mobilizes. More specifically, it investigates the various mechanisms of care within which the demoniac is placed. In addition to staging scenarios of healing under the form of exorcism that Jesus or saints perform, the plays also map out the ways in which the symptoms of possession are interpreted, exposed, and narrated among the members of the community. The identity of the demoniac is, therefore, the result of a polyphony of stories which show how the vulnerability of a subject creates emotional collective bonds.

Notes

1. Rimbaud, “Lettre à Georges Izambard, 13 mai 1871”, in Arthur Rimbaud, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), 252 quoted in Michel de Certeau, *L'écriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 302: “C’est faux de dire: je pense. On devrait dire: on me pense” [It’s false to say: I think. One should say: I am thought.]
2. de Certeau, *L'écriture de l'histoire*, 284–315.

3. Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974–1975*, trans. Graham Burchell, eds. Valerio Marchetti and Antonolla Salomoni (New York: Picador, 1999), 201–30: “When doctors analyzed convulsion they were at the same trying to show the extent to which the phenomena of witchcraft, or even those of possession, were in actual fact only pathological phenomena” (224).
4. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography at the Salpêtrière*, trans. Alisa Hartz (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).
5. For an exhaustive list of 19th century treatises pertaining to the study of hysteria see Janet Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth Century France* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 32.
6. Jean-Martin Charcot and Paul Richer, *Les Démoniaques dans l’art* (Paris: Delahaye and Lecrosnier, 1887).
7. Charles Richet, “Les démoniaques d’aujourd’hui,” *Revue des deux mondes* 37 (15 January 1880): 340–72.
8. For a larger list of 19th century works that specifically deal with hysteria as an avatar of late-medieval and early-modern possession see Brian Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 127–29.
9. For instance, Richet in “Les démoniaques d’aujourd’hui” sees a direct correlation between the early-modern symptomatology of possession and the 19th century medicalized discourse on hysteria: “Si nous appelons ces attaques accès démoniaques ou accès d’hystéro-épilepsie, c’est que pendant longtemps on a cru que les démons étaient les agents réels, vivants, qui provoquaient ces phénomènes morbides effrayants. Les symptômes sont tout à fait les mêmes, et il suffit de lire la description de l’attaque démoniaque d’autrefois pour reconnaître qu’elle est absolument identique à l’accès hystéro-épileptique d’aujourd’hui.” [If we name these attacks demoniac attack or hysterico-epileptic attack it’s because for a long time we thought that demons were the real agents that provoked these terrifying morbid phenomena. The symptoms are quite the same and it’s enough to read the description of a demonic attack from then [from the early-modern period, that is] to see that it’s absolutely identical to the hysterico-epileptic attack from today].
10. Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 115.
11. Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*.
12. Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria*, 167.
13. Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies*, 1–54.
14. Levack, *The Devil Within*.
15. Levack, *The Devil Within*, 129.
16. Levack, *The Devil Within*, 169.
17. Moshe Sluhovskiy, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 6.

18. Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 82–85.
19. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 83.
20. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 79–125.
21. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 79–125, 274–319.
22. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, eds. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 118.
23. Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2002), 236–73.
24. However, for Hollywood, the fetish is not the Freudian response to sexual difference through which the other's difference and, hence, subjectivity, are never accepted because of their objectivization. Following Anne McClintock who defines the fetish as a "the displacement of a host of social contradictions onto impassioned objects [that defies] reduction to a single originary trauma or the psychopathology of the individual subject" [Anne McClintock quoted in Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 239], Hollywood pleads for a political and historical understanding of the fetish. Thus, argues Hollywood, in addition to being aware of how specific forms of social contradictions produced various forms of fetishization, one should also pay attention to how "these contradictions are often collapsed into naturalized categories of sexual difference, which, in turn, naturalize other forms of difference" (Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 256–57).
25. Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*.
26. Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 246–47.
27. Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 203–30.
28. Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 205.
29. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*; Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 205.
30. Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 205.
31. Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 180–263. Jean Gerson even designs a sort of forensic schema: "Tu, quis, quid, quare, //Cui, qualiter, unde, require. Who *is it to whom the revelation is made?* What *does the revelation itself mean and to what does it refer?* Why *is it said to have taken place?* To whom *was it manifested for advice?* What kind of life *does the visionary lead?* Whence *does the revelation originate?*" in *The Concept of "Discretio spirituum" in Jean Gerson's "De probatione spirituum" and "De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis,"* trans. Paschal Boland (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1959), 30.
32. Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 233–63.
33. Michael D. Bailey, *Battling Demons: Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 91–138.

34. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *The Strange Case of Ermine de Reims: A Medieval Woman between Demons and Saints* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).
35. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *The Strange Case of Ermine de Reims*, 96–150.
36. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *The Strange Case of Ermine de Reims*, 33–57.
37. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *The Strange Case of Ermine de Reims*, 58–95.
38. See Teresa Brennan, “‘The Contexts of Vision’ from a Specific Standpoint,” in *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives in Sight*, ed. Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 219–30.
39. Brennan, “‘The Contexts of Vision,’” 224.
40. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).
41. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 3–24. The quotation comes from p. 95.
42. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 95.
43. Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2010).
44. Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press), 1–20.
45. Brian Massumi, *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002).
46. Adriana Cavarero, *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence*, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
47. Cavarero, *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence*, 20.
48. Judith Butler, *Frames of War When is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009).
49. Butler, *Frames of War*, 35: In this sense, Butler reveals the irreducible necessity that enjoins us to think critically about social mechanisms of raising collective responsibility for such vulnerable subjects when she says: “am I responsible only to myself? Are there others for whom am I responsible? (...) Am I responsible for all others, or only to some, and on what basis would I draw that line.” External socio-political frameworks are crucial in validating which subjects can be placed (or not) under the category of vulnerability. Not all lives, argues Butler, carry the same weight and, consequently, only those subjects deemed worth of (economic, emotional, or political) value can be thought of in terms of care.
50. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *The Strange Case of Ermine de Reims*; Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*; Pierre-André Sigal, *L’homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale (XIe–XIIIe siècle)* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1985); Florence Chave-Mahir, *L’exorcisme des possédés dans l’Église de l’Occident (Xe–XIVe siècle)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); Barbara Newman, “Possessed by the Spirit: Devout Women, Demoniacs, and the Apostolic Life in the Thirteenth Century,” *Speculum* 73 (1998): 733–70.
51. Graham Runnalls, “Les Mystères de la Passion en langue française: tentative de classement,” *Romania* 114 (1996): 468–516.

52. Runnalls, "Les Mystères," 481.
53. Runnalls, "Les Mystères," 481.
54. Eustache Mercadé, *Passion d'Arras*, ed. Jules-Marie Richard (Arras: Société du Pas-de-Calais, 1893).
55. Arnoul Gréban, *Mystère de la Passion*, eds. Gaston Paris and Gaston Raynaud (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1878).
56. Each of the Passion plays is divided into *journées* which represent the temporal interval in which episodes from the play were staged. Nevertheless, *journée* does not necessarily coincide with a single day. Whatever the text designates as *une journée* could have been effectively staged during several days. Jean Michel adapts the 2nd and 3rd *journée* from Gréban's play.
57. Jean Michel, *Mystère de la Passion*, ed. Omer Jodogone (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1959).
58. Runnalls, "Les Mystères," 494–506.
59. Runnalls, "Les mystères," 491–92.
60. *Le Mystère de saint Remi*, ed. Jelle Koopmans (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 35–36.
61. Andrieu de la Vigne, *Le Mystère de saint Martin*, ed. André Duplat (Geneva: Droz, 1979).
62. Jelle Koopmans, *Le théâtre des exclus au Moyen Age: hérétiques, sorcières et marginaux* (Paris: Imago, 1997); Élise Dupras, *Diabes et saints: rôle des diables dans les mystères hagiographiques français* (Geneva: Droz, 2006).
63. Irina Mezler, *A Social History of Disability: Cultural Considerations of Physical Impairment* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006); Jenni Kuuliala, *Childhood Disability and Social Integration in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).
64. Jean- Pierre Bordier, *Le Jeu de la Passion: le message chrétien et le théâtre français (XIIIe-XVIe s.)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998), 48–51.
65. *Le Jardin de Plaisance et Fleur de Rhétorique*, ed. Eugénie Droz and Arthur Piaget, 2 vol. (Paris: F. Didot, 1910–1925, SATF).
66. Jane M. Taylor, *The Making of Poetry: Late-Medieval French Poetic Anthologies* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2007), 229–291.
67. For a detailed analysis of some of these poetic principles and their connection with music see Philipp Jeserich and Musica Naturalis, *Speculative Music Theory and Poetics, from Saint Augustine to the Late Middle Ages in France*, trans. Michael Curley and Steven Rendall (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 293–363.
68. *Recueil d'Arts de seconde rhétorique*, ed. Ernest Langlois (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902) (reprinted Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1974).
69. Taylor, *The Making of Poetry*, 256.
70. Claude Thiry, "Le théâtre, ou la poétique de l'entredoux," *Étude de Lettres* 4 (2002) (*Poétique en transition: entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance*), ed. Jean-Claude Mühlethaler and Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, 43–69; Véronique Dominguez, "Des arts poétiques à la scène: Rémanences du théâtre medieval dans les textes et dans les pratiques du XVIe siècle," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 21

(2011): 225–46; Olga-Anna Duhl, “Genres dramatiques,” “Un aspect particulier des fonctions sociales de la poésie: le rôle du théâtre,” *Poétiques de la Renaissance: Le modèle italien, le monde franco-bourguignon et leur héritage en France au XVI^e siècle*, ed. Perrine Galand-Hallyn and Fernand Hallyn (Geneva: Droz, 2001), 47–53, 337–46.

71. *Jardin de Plaisance*, fol a II.
72. *Jardin de Plaisance*, fol a II.
73. *Jardin de Plaisance*, fol a II.
74. Dominguez, “Des arts poétiques à la scène,” 225–46.
75. Thiry, “Le théâtre, ou la poétique de l’entredeux,” 60–69; Dominguez, “Des arts poétiques à la scène,” 225–46.
76. Dominguez, “Des arts poétiques à la scène,” 232–34.
77. Véronique Dominguez, *La scène et la Croix: Le jeu de l’acteur dans les Passions dramatiques françaises (XIV^e–XVI^e siècles)* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2007), 231–56.
78. Thiry, “Le théâtre, ou la poétique de l’entredeux,” 66–69.
79. Edmond Faral, “Quelques remarques sur le *Miracle de Théophile* de Rutebeuf,” *Romania* 72 (1951): 182–201 quoted in Dominguez, “Des arts poétiques à la scène,” 237.
80. Thiry, “Le théâtre, ou la poétique de l’entredeux,” 66–69; Dominguez, “Des arts poétiques à la scène,” 236–46.
81. Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay, *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the Rose to the Rhétoriqueurs* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011).
82. Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*, 197–99.
83. Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*, 199.
84. Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*, 199.
85. Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry*, 199.
86. Graham Runnalls, “La *Confrérie de la Passion* et les mystères: recueils de documents relatifs à l’histoire de la *Confrérie de la Passion* depuis la fin du XIV^e jusqu’au milieu du XVI^e siècle,” *Romania* 122 (2004): 135–201; Jelle Koopmans, “L’effectivité de la législation sur le théâtre: Le Parlement de Paris a-t-il interdit les mystères (en 1548)?” *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* 23 (2012): 141–50.
87. Arch. nat. de France, X1A 4914, f. 80–82 quoted in Runnalls, “La *Confrérie de la Passion*,” 171–72.
88. Given the centrality of the body of the actor, the plays are a sign for something else. Indeed, from the work of both continental and English theater historians such as Jody Enders, (“Performing Miracles: The Mysterious Mimesis of Valenciennes (1547),” in *Theatricality*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 40–64) and Sarah Beckwith (*Signifying God: Social Relations and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press), 59–71) we know that late-medieval religious plays whether staged in France as Passion Plays or in England as York Corpus Christi plays are a type of sacramental theater. Just like the sacraments, the plays are “visible signs of

an invisible grace” (Beckwith, *Signifying God*, 60). The body of the actor performing mystery plays works as if it is similar to *imago Dei* without, however, being the same as the image that it represents. As Beckwith points out, quoting Stanton Garner, “the performing body occupies, then, a paradoxical role as both the activating agent of such dualities as presentation/representation, sign/referent, reality/illusion and that which most dramatically threatens to collapse them.” (Beckwith, *Signifying God*, 64 quoting Stanton Garner, *The Absent Voice: Narrative Comprehension in the Theater* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 27–28) At the center of the plays, thus, it is this dual body which negotiates its existence between the corporeal materiality of the actor and the referential biblical material and networks of symbols.

89. Sharon Aronson-Lehavi, *Street Scenes: Late Medieval Acting and Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 17.
90. “A Treatise of Miraclis Playing: A Modern English Version of a *Tretise of Miraclis Pleying*,” trans. Aronson-Lehavi, *Street Scenes*, 134.
91. “A Treatise of Miraclis Playing,” 135.
92. “A Treatise of Miraclis Playing,” 136.
93. Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).
94. Jill Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture: Sensual Piety in Late Medieval York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
95. Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture*, 30. This happens, Stevenson points out, because performance privileges an encounter with “bodies forth” and such encounters are based on a special type of seeing which corresponds to what Augustine calls “corporeal vision.” (Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture*, 30.) Belonging to a tripartite model of appropriating reality through the senses, corporeal vision is the lowest in this hierarchy being followed by spiritual and intellectual vision. For Augustine, corporeal vision operates through the body that perceives the visible exterior reality and presents it to the bodily senses (Augustine, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, trans. R. J. Teske, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1991), 186–215). According to Augustine, this type of seeing titillates the senses and produces not only carnal pleasure but curiosity for knowledge, a form of temptation, nevertheless: “Beside the lust of the flesh which inheres in the delight given by all pleasures of the senses (...), there exists in the soul, through the medium of the same bodily senses [sensus corporis], a cupidity which does not take delight in carnal pleasures but in perceptions acquired through the flesh. It is a vain inquisitiveness dignified with the title of knowledge and science. (...) To entrap the eyes men have made innumerable additions to the various arts and crafts (...). Outwardly they follow what they make. Inwardly they abandon God by whom they were made” (Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford and New York: Oxford University

- Press, 1992), 10.34–35 quoted in Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture*, 31). For Augustine, theatrical experience occurs then within the regime of sensuous seeing which consists of perception acquired through the flesh. The viewer's attention is caught within the contours of the object of contemplation ("arts and crafts") and such fixation creates a form of sensual engagement in which the spectator simulates rather than has real pious feelings (Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture*, 31–32).
96. Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture*, 30.
 97. Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Arthur Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 3–6.
 98. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller*, 36.
 99. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller*, 36.
 100. Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*, 48.
 101. Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*, 49.
 102. The historian of late-medieval spirituality, Gábor Klaniczay, remarks that a similar fluid structure can be detected in miracle stories that function as evidence of a particular saint's thaumaturgic powers. These miracles are incorporated in saints' vitas and canonization trials. Gábor Klaniczay, "Ritual and Narrative in Late Medieval Miracle Accounts: The Construction of the Miracles," in *Religious Participation in Ancient and Medieval Societies: Rituals, Interaction and Identity*, eds. Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Ville Vuolanto (Rome: Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae, 2013), 207–23.
 103. Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. and with an introduction by Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1–16.
 104. Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, trans. and with an introduction by Paul A. Kottman (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 36.

Medieval Theologians Facing the Possessed

As an object of knowledge, the medieval notion of demonic possession is the result of a plurality of socio-intellectual discourses shaped by particular historical concerns and ecclesiastical anxieties. Vocabularies of possession, causes, symptoms, or even remedies are, therefore, contingent upon the manner in which the relation between the demonic and the divine, the material and the spiritual, and the interior and the surface of the body were fashioned out.¹ This chapter will trace the history of possession by insisting on those nodal points which made possible the shift from a particular model of possession revolving around the inner physiology of the demoniac to one in which the focus is on the somatic symptoms of possession surfacing on the skin. While the former model echoes theological and medical preoccupations regarding the relation between soul, spirit, and body, the latter, emerging during the late Middle Ages, is part of a larger systemic theological discourse directing attention towards female spirituality and modes of assessing, validating, and, ultimately, controlling it.²

Demoniacs, Demons, and Aerial Creatures in Early-Christianity

While the biblical context provides exemplary demoniac figures and the spiritual framework to interpret the demonic attacks upon humans, early-Christian theological figures are preoccupied in defining the morphological structure of demons as non-material creatures and the technicalities of their interactions with humans. Some of the questions they ask are: Who are the spirits? How do they appear to humans? What is happening inside the human body when a spirit starts to assail it? Tertullian (ca. 155–ca.240) is among the first Christian thinkers to portray both angelic and demonic spirits in their material and spiritual dimension and to explain the way they interconnect with humans. In his treatise, *Apologeticum*, demonic spirits, ubiquitous creatures whose abode is in the air (22, 10),³ are labeled as *substantias spiritales* (22, 1), *inmundis spirites* (33, 10; 23, 14) or, simply, as *daemonas* (23, 1).⁴ They are invisible to both the sight and the senses of human beings and, consequently, can be spotted only after judging the marks and the effects they create around them and especially on humans.⁵ As for their *modus operandi*, the spirits do not enter surreptitiously inside humans; on the contrary, even if the spirits are invisible to human senses and sight, they assail the humans corporeally and spiritually and destroy them by means of their breath:

The breath of demons and angels achieves the corruption of the mind in foul bursts of fury and insanity, or in savage lusts, along with kind of delusion. (22.6)⁶

Tertullian, however, does not question what happens to the human body and spirit when it is defiled by any sort of demonic presence inside. John Cassian (ca. 435), one of the important monastic figures of early Christianity, explains in detail how spirits and demons, two categories that he uses interchangeably, act on human beings. His views on this topic are developed in *The Conferences* (ca. 420–429)⁷ and *The Institutions* (417–418),⁸ a series of ascetic precepts meant to serve as both moral and practical guidance to novices who decide to enter the monastic life.⁹ Just like Tertullian, Cassian maintains that spirits populate the air, are organized in legions, and are invisible to humans.¹⁰ As far as their corporeality is concerned, they are made of the subtle air but this does not transform them into incorporeal beings as they have a body that is more refined than of the humans.¹¹ Cassian explicitly states that spirits cannot penetrate into the soul. The reason for that is that the soul and the spirits are constituted of the same substance, the subtle air. They cannot be united because, underscores Cassian, this is the

attribute of God alone: only he is incorporeal and simple nature in himself and consequently can be contained within the soul.¹²

This logic applies in the case of possessed subjects as well. Cassian points out that demoniacs are those subjects who are under the influence of spirits. Yet not all demoniacs are affected by spirits in the same way. For instance, certain possessed subjects say and do things that they are not aware of and do not have any memory of them in the long run. Others, on the contrary, do remember their actions and words.¹³ However, regardless of how demoniacs manifest themselves, their possession occurs as a result of spirits' intervention within their bodies and not within their souls. How do spirits act within the human body? In explaining how the body is affected by the unclean spirits, Cassian adopts an Aristotelian view about the relation between the body and the soul;¹⁴ the spirits weaken the body and enter those organs where "the soul's vigor is contained, impose an unbearable and immeasurable weight on them, and overwhelm the intellectual faculties and deeply darken their understanding."¹⁵ Spirits, therefore, being made of air, can invade the flesh which is comprised of dense and solid matter,¹⁶ thereby affecting the intellectual faculties. However, the unclean spirits cannot penetrate the latter. Only the Trinity, as an incorporeal entity, can embrace, encompass and, even flow into every intellectual nature.¹⁷ With Cassian, the discussion around the notion of demonic possession achieves a sharper ontological and physiological dimension. We find out what demons or unclean spirits are, what their bodies consist of, and, more importantly, that they can affect only the body and not the soul. Yet in Christian thought, the soul, more than the body, occupies an important role even if the two entities cannot be conceptualized independently one from another. How is the notion of demonic possession affected when the soul enters the equation?

Augustine (d. 430) approached the concept of demonic possession precisely in this perspective, that is, in connection with a complex theory of the interrelated elements of the soul (*anima*), body (*corpus*), spirit (*spiritus*), and intellect (*mens*). In Book 12 of the *Literal Meaning of Genesis*,¹⁸ written under the influence of the Stoics¹⁹ and Neoplatonics,²⁰ Augustine provides a detailed explanation of how the human body fabricates its own sensations and perceptions in connection to the spirit, the soul, and the mind. Augustine considers the spirit (*spiritus*) as the vehicle which galvanizes the triad soul-body-rational mind. The spirit, labeled as the rational mind (*mens rationalis*), is the superior part of the soul where "there is a sort of eye of the soul, where the image and recognition of God is to be found" (XII, 7. 18). Augustine develops, thus, a hierarchical system of perceiving, making, and interpreting knowledge from the outer world. In his

schema each element—the body, the soul, the spirit, and the *mens*—elicits three types of perception corresponding to three kinds of vision: bodily, spiritual, and intellectual. The first one is, for Augustine, the equivalent of seeing and operates through the body that perceives the visible exterior reality and presents it to the body sensitivity (*corporis sensus*) (XII, 6. 15; XII, 7. 16) via five streams of unequal length that unite the body with the soul (XII, 16, 32). The case of spirit possession (whether demonic or divine) occurs when a person cannot discern the difference between the physical appearance of the bodies themselves presented to the bodily senses in the outer world and the image of their likeness imprinted in the spirit. Possession can take place when the soul is snatched away into a state of alienation, even if the body is in good health (XII, 19. 41). In this situation, the demoniac is totally detached from all the corporeal senses and can apprehend only the images of things whose image is produced within the soul and not the things perceived in reality through the senses.²¹

Moreover, unlike earlier thinkers, Augustine circumscribes the phenomenon of demonic possession within the realm of mental pathology whose vocabulary and symptoms had been theorized and debated all throughout classical and late antiquity by Hippocrates, Soranus, Caelius Aurelianus, and Galen.²² All these physicians distinguished between the delirium accompanied by fever, phrenitis, and other forms of the loss of wits such as *insania*, madness, *furor*, and mania.²³ Augustine too refers to possession by making use of this medical vocabulary to describe various types of madness. In the Augustinian version, the demoniac suffers from mental alienation (*mentis alienatio*) (XII, 17. 35) and, more precisely, from delirium accompanied by acute fever, a physiological condition which transforms him into a frenetic:

the man was in the grip of a fever, and used to say all these as if he were delirious, but because of all this he was thought to be suffering from a demon (...) his loss of wits however, or demonic possession, did not give way even to the priest, except when he was cured of his fever, as delirious people usually are cured. (XII, 17. 35)

Possession is thus caused by the demon's presence inside the human body, but the exterior signs after which such a condition is labeled belong to the field of medical thought. Demonic possession and delirium are, if not interchangeable, at least in a strong causal relationship. Because the possessed is feverish and speaks inarticulately, she is labeled as demoniac. Once cured of fever, the demoniac is cured of possession as well.

The third explanatory framework within which Augustine places the notion of demonic possession is that of “discernment of spirits,” the technique

of distinguishing between divine and demonic influences. In the same *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine states that just like good spirits, bad spirits provoke the human soul to see things.²⁴ During this process, the spirit of the possessed person and that of his tormentor become one and the same entity. Furthermore, not only do the bad spirits imitate the actions of the good ones but they also operate in the same manner when approaching the humans' souls: on the one hand, they are quiet and touch the bodies in a non-violent way, and, on the other hand, in contact with the humans, the evil spirits change their appearance into angels in order to seduce people and influence them according to their own interest.²⁵ In distinguishing between good and bad spirits, the intellectual vision, activated through the use of *mens*, the superior portion of the soul, has an important role. If the soul cannot tell the difference between the image of a thing and the thing itself, intelligence, for sure, has this capacity to question the referent and the meaning of these images formed in the soul:

the intellect is applied, asking what those things signify or what useful lesson they are teaching, and it either finds the answer and attains its object, or it does not find it and holds itself in suspense, in order not to lapse by some perniciously rash judgment into a fatal error. (XII, 14. 29)

The function of *mens* and of intellectual vision is also crucial in preventing demons from having access to the inner beauty of humans' virtues which are the product of the superior part of soul. In exchange, demons can visualize and appropriate only the representations (both visual and cognitive) that are formed and/or anticipated in the spirit.

In short, Augustine deals with the notion of demonic possession at three levels of interpretation. For him, the demoniac is that subject who cannot make the distinction between real things and their representations designating their images formed via perception with the sense organs. Second, the concept of demonic possession has its own pathology. A possessed subject is labeled as such because she displays a particular set of symptoms: a delirious state, fever, impossibility of making the distinction between truth and falsity, and inability to produce an articulate linguistic discourse. As we have seen, these physiological characteristics can overlap with other mental maladies (*frenesis*, mania, *furor*, etc.) all having in common the loss of wits.²⁶ Third, Augustine's theory of possession is articulated at an epistemological level as well: knowledge about demonic visions needs to be filtered at the level of *mens*.

In early-Christian thought defining possession requires the creation not only of a multifarious vocabulary but equally of various theological explanations about

the mechanisms through which unclean spirits take possession of humans. Possessed people are those that are inhabited by demons, acted upon by them (*energument*),²⁷ or crept into by demons.²⁸ Moreover, given the pathological behavior of a typical demoniac, consisting of enraged gestures, loss of wits, foaming at the mouth, or gnashing of teeth, possession, more often than not, is categorized under the umbrella of mental maladies such as *furor*, *alienatio* and mania. These denominations are not simply arbitrary linguistic labels but demonstrate that in early-Christian theological thought the phenomenon of possession was envisaged as an invasion, as a true assault by demonic spirits on the interior of the human body. Demons, however, cannot just reside anywhere inside humans but only in those regions like the body that are not governed by any rational and spiritual organs.

Demoniacs in the 12th and 13th Centuries: Bodily Interiority, Exteriority, and the Divine

From the examination of early-Christian sources, we have seen that demoniacs are still labeled as such from judgments stemming from the external behavioral signs they displayed. At the same time, strong authoritative theological figures discussed the notion of demonic possession within the context of the physiological and psychological relations established among the soul, spirit, body, and intellect, even if they referred more to the contingencies and the (moral and physical) effects of the act of possession upon the human beings.

However, an explanation as to what the interior of the human body looks like once a demon is inside was still to be given. This issue was touched upon starting with the 12th century when it came into being as a complex theological program centered on the relation between the triads of body-spirit-(intellectual) soul and man- God-nature. Two important intellectual currents were particularly important in shaping this perspective: Galenic physiology and Aristotle's natural philosophy.²⁹ As J. Bono justly notes, the former provided an "explanatory language that could be incorporated not only into Platonic, Aristotelian, Neoplatonic, and Augustinian philosophies, but also into strictly theological conceptions."³⁰ Indeed, Galen complicated the Stoic concept of spirit (*pneuma*) which, according to him, derives not only from the air inspired into the body but from the blood as well.

Therefore, the spirit does not exactly have the consistency of matter, although it is of material origin; neither is it pure air. For Galen spirit is rather like hot

vapor: corporeal but, at the same time, rarefied. The spirit can be found in three main bodily areas carrying out different functions associated with different organs and, consequently, bearing various denominations. Thus, the spirit dwelling in the brain is called *animal spirit* and is responsible for the formation of perception and knowledge via the five senses. Another place where spirit resides and activates is, according to Galen, in the liver and is labeled accordingly as *natural spirit*. Finally, spirit emanates from the heart itself as well in which case it is named *vital spirit*. Galen considered that each of the three members—brain, liver, heart—governed or provided the ruling principle for a group of organs. It is precisely this aspect of Galenic physiology that certain 12th century intellectuals re-worked. Such was the case with viewpoints emerging from Cistercian thinkers like William of Saint Thierry (d. 1148), Isaac of Stella (d. 1169), and Alcher of Clairvaux (d. 1180) and the Victorines represented by Hugh of Saint Victor (d. 1141) or Richard of Saint Victor (d. 1173). They maintain the Galenic understanding of spirit as a rarefied flux of a hot vapor which animates the body. Yet, under the influence of Aristotelian thought, according to which the heart alone was the source of life and heat and, consequently, the absolute governing principle of the body, both the 12th century doctors and theologians gave the utmost importance to the role of the heart and, subsequently, to the Galenic *vital spirit*. In this sense, we read in an anatomy manual, *Anatomia Magistri Nicolai Physici*, originating from the 12th century medical milieu of the Salernitan School that:

the heart is placed in the center of the body for the same reason for which the sun is placed in the center of the world, namely, that its heat may be evenly distributed to all lands; and accordingly the heart is so placed that its heat may be evenly distributed to all members.³¹

In the same vein, the Cistercian thinker, William of St. Thierry in his treatise *The Nature of the Body and the Soul* points out “that man cannot live more than seven days without food, nor more than seven hours without air. Therefore, the spiritual power is that which gives life to everything, that from which everything living in the body lives.”³² How exactly does the vital spirit operate? The same William, employing a medical language of Galenic origin, underscores that the heart has two ventricles: the right one receives the blood that is transported by a vein from the liver. The left one is responsible for the formation of the vital spirit out of the blood pumped from the right ventricle. Indeed, the left ventricle “opens out on to a large artery, supplying the vital spirit everywhere through all its parts.”³³ After that, the vital spirit is carried to the upper part of the human body and through the “juvenile” arteries (or the “juveniles”), situated on both sides of the neck, it

enters the cranium and, then, the brain. The “juveniles” spread like a net at the base of the brain, a portion also known under the name of *retus mirabilis*. It is here that the vital spirit is purified and, thus, changes into the animal spirit. Two arteries that curve back above the brain area carry the animal spirit to the right lobe where it creates imagination and sensation and then, through the middle passage, which is the seat of reason, the animal spirit moves to the left lobe where it creates memory and movement. The latter is animated and, ultimately, governed by the *spiritus* which is very far from being an abstract entity but is rather a material substance, albeit different from that out of which the body is created, which is both an instrument and a repository of life.³⁴ This model provided a valid conceptual framework for conceiving the interior of the human body not only in its anatomical profile but also in its physiological and sensory aspects.

Shaping such a detailed description of the body or physics of the body, as William calls it, is just one part of the endeavor of the 12th century theologians. The other major aspect of their project is to integrate *spiritus* into Christian thought in which the notion of soul and, more precisely, that of intellectual soul (*animus*) and its relation to God, are crucial. Indeed, the intellectuals of that period put a great deal of energy into elaborating not only a physics of the body but a physics of the soul as well in William of Saint Thierry’s terms, or a true science of the rational soul, to quote Alain Boureau.³⁵ Central to this project is the idea that man has been created in the image of God and the intellectual/rational soul (*animus*) is precisely the instrument through which God can be attained. What is this rational soul? Technically most Cistercian authors opposed *anima* to the soul (*animus*) and, further, to the *spiritus* and the body, two elements that belonged rather to the physical realm and, hence, occupied an inferior position. Unlike the spirit, which, in medical thought, as we have seen, is considered a substantial entity, *anima* is “something invisible and incorporeal, and for this reason not localized,” points out William of St. Thierry.³⁶ Nevertheless, more often than not the notion of *anima* overlaps with that of *spiritus*, *animus*, or *mens*. In this sense, a passage from the treatise *On the Spirit and the Soul*, attributed throughout the Middle Ages to Saint Augustine, but in reality authored by Alcher of Clairvaux,³⁷ is illuminating:

The soul (*anima*) is a spirit which is intellectual, rational, always living, always in motion, and capable of willing both the good and the bad. According to its Maker’s kindness and the exercise of its role, the soul is called by various names. It is called “soul” (*anima*) when it enlivens, “spirit” when it contemplates, “sense” when it feels, *animus* when it knows. Furthermore, the soul is termed “mind” when it understands, “reason” when it distinguishes, “memory” when it remembers, and “will” when it consents. Although all of these differ in name, yet they

are but one substance, since all of these aspects are really but one soul (*anima*). The properties are diverse, but the essence is one.³⁸

In several other instances in his treatise, Alcher nuances this understanding of *anima* as a substance and describes the other elements (*animus*, *mens*, *spiritus*) as its accidents. Thus *anima* is not only rational but also has four powers of desire: the former two are categorized as a negative appetite or vices (fear and pain) whereas the latter—joy and hope—constitute the positive appetite or the virtues which allow it.³⁹

What is the precise role of these three elements? Under the influence of Plato's dialogue *Timaeus*, translated by Chalcidius from Greek into Latin in 321, Alcher sees the soul not as something static but as an entity that is always in movement and aspires to something superior which is God. The positive appetite facilitates the soul's capacity to attach itself to something it yearns for and loves while the negative appetite has the opposite effect. Rationality in its turn confers on the soul its power of knowledge which, according to the instruments that it uses, is divided into five properties: sense knowledge, imagination, reason, discernment, and understanding.⁴⁰ The soul strives to wisdom via these five properties. Thus, as Isaac of Stella puts it: "by means of sense knowledge the soul perceives bodies; by imagination that which is scarcely a body; by reason, the scarcely incorporeal; by discernment, the truly incorporeal. By understanding, it perceives the pure incorporeal which does not require a body in order to exist, nor location in order to be somewhere."⁴¹ The latter is by and large the equivalent of God in whose image the soul is made. The soul is gazing on and contemplating the image of God through understanding. This way God makes use of the image of the Trinity which, as William of St. Thierry explains, "impresses its mark on bodies while giving knowledge to souls."⁴² We deal therefore with a hierarchical formation of knowledge and sensation: "the image of the Trinity proceeds from the supreme being which is God, through the middle being which is the soul, to the lowest bodies."⁴³

How is the possessed body understood in this new intellectual paradigm developed in the 12th century in which physiology, natural science, and theology converge? Nancy Caciola points out that, starting with the 12th century and throughout the 13th century, theologians begin to shape a "physiological model for spirit possession as a counterpart to the physiological model of the human spirit."⁴⁴ Actually the process started much earlier, as I have shown, with authoritative voices like Cassian and Augustine who coined an ontology of spirit possession and provided a fairly strong language to conceptualize it. Thus, if we believe Cassian, demons, as spiritual creatures, cannot enter the soul because the latter is

made of the same substance as the demons and, therefore, two similar creatures cannot attract one another. Yet, the body, constituted by a less refined material, can be assaulted by demons and their ethereal bodies. Augustine, on the other hand, maintains that, technically, demons can, to a certain extent, influence that portion of the soul dominated by the spiritual vision but not that under the governance of *mens*, the most intellectual part of the soul, roughly the equivalent of the Cistercian *anima*. Yet, we have seen that in the 12th century, the conception regarding the interior of the human body changes radically: on the one hand, God via the Trinity shapes the cognitive and sensory knowledge formed in the rational soul and, on the other, the vital spirit produced in the heart assures the proper physical functioning of the body. In other words, the interior space of the human being is very far from being a void but is governed by a flux (whether material like the vital spirit or incorporeal like the rational soul) responsible for somatic, mental, spiritual, and physiological functions in the body. In this scheme, where exactly do demons intervene in the interior of the human being if they intervene at all?

Interestingly enough, the only voice among the Cistercian thinkers who addresses the issue of demons dwelling inside humans is Alcher of Clairvaux. He points out that demons cannot possibly act upon humans from inside. His argument is two-fold. First, he uses the older Augustinian image of certain individuals, among whom the demoniacs, who cannot make the distinction between real things and their images formed in the soul. This is the case with persons who think that they have been turned into beasts; but actually it is the faculty of the imagination that influences the other senses to think so because “the intellectual soul and the body could not possibly be truly turned into the form and shape of a beast by any art or power.”⁴⁵

The other category that functions within this erroneous logic, where things that happen in the imagination are considered real, is represented by the witches or, rather, by what constitutes a proto-image of the 15th century witchlike figure. In the tradition of the *Canon episcopi*, which Alcher integrates in his argument, witches (*mulierculae*), under the delusions inflicted by Satan, think that they actually travelled at night with the whole array of witchlike figures such as Diana, Herodias, or Minerva. In reality, points out Alcher, using an Augustinian argument, the *mulierculae* are in fact operating at the level of corporeal vision instead of that of intellectual vision which would allow them to clearly distinguish between corporeal and imaginary facts.⁴⁶

The other reason Alcher provides to dismantle the possibility of demons' intervention within humans is much more grounded within 12th century theological

thought. Within this form of reasoning, demons cannot penetrate the main centers of physiological, mental, and somatic activity within the human body simply because they are all under the jurisdiction of the Trinity which, as we have seen, is shaped solely by God. To be invaded by a different entity than the one that governs them is not an ontologically valid principle because “only the Trinity can enter a man and fill the nature and the substance which it has created.”⁴⁷ Therefore, the divine flux blocks the demons from entering the heart, the mind, and the soul. This does not mean, however, that demons do not affect humans but their actions are rather the result of moral faults than of a particular anatomical or somatic default within the interior structure of the human constitution.

In an intellectual tradition like Alcher's, that conceives the heart as the engine that fuels the whole body and *anima* as the arch principle that governs the cognitive, somatic, and sensible functions in the body, there is hardly any place for demons dwelling inside. In other words, in 12th century theology, the human body is represented in such a way that it renders the idea of the physical presence of demons inside humans almost an ontological impossibility.

Alcher's argument creates the prerequisites only for divine presence whereas its counterpart—the demons—intervene upon the human body only from the exterior. In a similar vein, Peter Lombard (d. 1160), emphasized in his influential *Four Book of Sentences* that “demons do not enter into the hearts of men substantially, but do so through the effect of their wickedness.”⁴⁸ Other opinions from the same period also stated that demons act upon human beings from outside. Such is the case with Hildegard of Bingen⁴⁹ who, like Alcher, points out that the nature of the human interior makes the demonic habitation in the interior of the human body impossible. However, for Hildegard, the fragility of the human body is the reason for which demons cannot possibly dwell inside. Indeed, if the devil entered the humans “in his own form (...) those persons' members would be dissolved more quickly than a straw is dispersed in the wind.”⁵⁰ The Benedictine Rupert of Deutz (d. 1129), in his treatise *De Trinitate*, dedicated to the image and functions of the Holy Ghost, nuances and, to a certain extent, even contradicts both Alcher and Hildegard's opinions regarding the ontological and physical impossibility of demons to reside inside humans. According to Rupert, the Holy Ghost, a spiritual creature itself, is the one that fills up the soul substantially.⁵¹ But, under the influence of Cassian's model of demonic possession, Rupert concedes that the unclean spirits can in fact be physically present inside the human beings, even if they cannot technically enter the soul substantially the way that the Holy Ghost does.⁵² How do malign spirits then operate? Rupert, unlike Hildegard and especially Alcher, does not embrace the idea of demons' presence as a moral category.

On the contrary, to account for their existence *in corpore*, he presupposes that the human body is morphologically constituted as a cavernous organism sheltering an assembly of hidden channels. It is this network that the unclean spirits surreptitiously invade to attack the soul.

Whereas for early-Christian authors the possessed body is an entity, voided of any divine presence and, hence, open to demons' assaults, in the 12th century the body and, more specifically, the interior of the human body is never figured as empty. On the contrary, it is a complex mechanism hierarchically stratified: first there is the "physical" body governed by the vital flux which, in turn, creates its own tripartite topography centered around the vital organs such as the brain, the heart, and the liver. Second, this whole scaffold is subordinated to the rational soul which, via the Trinity, connects directly to God. The body, in this perspective, looks like a system of communicating vessels that are filled up with both the vital and divine spirit. When demons intervene, even if they touch upon the soul which is not the *anima* of the Cistercian or the Augustinian *mens*, they cannot alter the very substance of the flow that populates the human interior in any way.

A few questions are left unanswered. Given the complex anatomical representation of both the outside and the inside of the human body emerging during this period, can one simply conceive that demons reside generically in the body as first Cassian and, later, Rupert of Deutz explained, in a more nuanced way? If the inner part of the body has a cavernous aspect, as Rupert pointed out, or, more specifically, is divided into three main blocks governed by the brain, the heart, and the liver, as the Cistercians following Galen wanted, exactly which part is invaded by demons? The answer, however, does not necessarily come from the 12th century intellectuals but one has to look into the 13th century to find out which parts of the body demons penetrate and how humans who, unable to see the interior of their bodies, can nevertheless account for demons' presence. To a certain extent, the issue has been touched upon by Augustine himself who, trenchantly, underscored that the superior part of the soul, the *mens*, which corresponds to the brain area, cannot possibly be inhabited by demons. The heart was also considered as the life-giving organ in the body and, thus, outside the demons' attacks. In this logic, then, the only part which is likely to be open to demons is the one centered around the liver corresponding to the lower parts of the body which house the vegetative soul.⁵³

Caesarius of Heisterbach (d. 1240), in his *Dialogue on Miracles*, follows this line of thought by pointing out that, indeed, demons cannot exist materially in the soul and alter its substance but can reside in the body and, more precisely, in the bowels: "when the devil is said to be within a man, this must not be understood

in the soul, but of the body, because he is able to pass into its empty cavities such as the bowels.”⁵⁴ Another author of miracles, Gerald of Wales (d. 1223) maintains a similar argument namely the devil can never attack the soul but only the body:

the demon (...) used to appear in the demoniac through certain swellings and agitations of the parts of the body which he possessed. When the book of the gospels or the relics of the saints were placed, for example, upon a swelling in the throat, the demon would immediately go down in the entrails, and when the holy objects were placed there, it would descend into the privy parts of the body.⁵⁵

Gerald's account is also interesting in showing how the surface of the body becomes a medium through which demons become visible. Marking the body with a network of physical signs (the swellings), which are not static but organic entities, demons move all along the superior part of the body, passing through the entrails, and going down into the anal parts. The skin, as the ultimate medium which captures the demonic presence from within the body, is also central in some *exempla* that a hagiographer and preacher like Thomas of Cantimpré (d. 1272) authored. In his collection of miracles, *De Apibus* [On Bees], Thomas mentions the case of a female demoniac who became possessed because she danced with a young man on a Sunday. Her body is exposed in front of a church outside the city where a young boy exorcizes it:

Immediately, the demon was visible through a swelling around the belly button, and the boy transfixed it by making the sign of the cross with his thumb. This way, gradually, with the help of the cross, he made the demon get up to the mouth, until everybody could see it in the form of a hairy worm in the opening of her mouth (...) the child opposed it by making the sign of salvation and obliged him to get out with great violence. This demon, thrown away in the form of a hairy worm, the boy grabbed carefully with his right hand and threw it in a little ditch filled with rained water (...) After that the child's hand was soiled with black stains as a result of contact with the worm; the stains vanished away once they were washed with holy water.⁵⁶

The demon literally inscribes its presence on the surface of the human body and becomes visible once it is perceived as a swelling around the digestive area and dragged along the inner side of the body to the mouth until it becomes a material entity (a worm) that can be destroyed.

These narratives show that we move from the interior of a body that a century before was conceived in rigorous, almost “scientific,” theological and physiological terms to the surface of the same body that now becomes a living organism.⁵⁷

Furthermore, if prior to the 13th century, demons could reside anywhere in the body, now when the demoniac's body is exposed, we actually see how demons operate on the surface and inside the body from their entrance up to their elimination. Most authors of exempla and hagiographies considered that demons enter and exit the humans either through open sensory organs or through body extremities. This idea derives from the concept that medieval intellectuals had about the body. In this sense, Marie-Christine Pouchelle⁵⁸ has pointed out that in medieval medical and encyclopedic thought, the body was conceived not as a sealed organism but as an entity possessing thresholds between its various parts.⁵⁹ The mouth, the eyes, the ears, in short all five sense organs, are considered "windows" or "doors" that allow the access to the body and its interior.⁶⁰ Humans, therefore, needed to watch the gates of their bodily orifices carefully in order to protect themselves from any attacks, or, as Jacob of Voragine puts it, "keep the doors of their five senses closed."⁶¹ Later on in the 14th century the author of *Ménagier de Paris* [The Goodman of Paris] (1393), a guidebook of advice for daily life meant for women, offers an even more detailed explanation as of why one should pay specific attention to the sensory organs: "There are five doors and the five windows whereby the Devil comes to steal away the chastity of the castle of the soul and the feeble body."⁶²

Nancy Caciola⁶³ noted that the mouth was the most common orifice by means of which demons would invade the humans' interior. The reason for this, she points out, is that medieval people, in the etymological tradition established by Isidore of Seville, thought that mouth (*os*) derives from door (*ostium*). Thus the mouth is the first opening between the interior and the exterior of the body and the first gate through which the Devil can enter the body.⁶⁴ In this sense, Caesarius of Heisterbach, re-using a story that was first incorporated by Gregory the Great in his hagiographical collection, mentions the case of a nun who, without making the sign of the cross, ate a lettuce leaf on which the Devil was sitting.⁶⁵ Jacob of Voragine recounts a similar tale of a monk who, while drinking was attacked by the devil that, under the shape of a fly, entered him.⁶⁶ The ear is another way of access and, in this vein, Caesarius narrates the story of a girl who felt the devil entering through one of her ears.⁶⁷ The eyes also represent a channel that facilitates the physical presence of demons inside humans. Such is the case of a boy who, after having looked at the eyes of a dead cat, the symbol of the devil, became possessed through the eye.⁶⁸ Demons also enter through the nails and flesh, as we find out from the canonization process of Clare of Montefalco,⁶⁹ and can reside physically in the human head. A witchcraft treatise like *Malleus maleficarum* [The Hammer of Witches] (1486) mentions the case of a male demoniac during whose exorcism

the devil confessed that he had been residing in his head.⁷⁰ Various bodily zones are, therefore, besieged by devils despite the fact that in the 13th century theological thought, demons just like angels, have aerial and not material bodies. In this sense, Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) states that demons, as incorporeal creatures and, thus, superior to human intellect, “can know the forms in our soul” but only from outside and “only when we will to do so.”⁷¹ However, when it comes to bodies, “the devil can inhabit a human being substantially, as in possessed people.”⁷²

The theological discourse on the demoniac shifts, therefore, from the interior of the human body to the surface, thereby focusing on elaborating various scenarios through which demons attack humans physically. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will investigate what accrues when at the end of the Middle Ages the exterior surface of the demoniac’s body starts to be the object of close examination on the part of theological authorities.

The 15th Century: Pathologizing the Demoniac

Late medieval theologians maintain to a large extent the vocabulary and conceptual framework of conceiving demonic possession through which demons enter the body through various openings and reside in the lower corporeal portions. But, in addition to localizing demons in bodies, they are also interested in examining, almost in a forensic manner, the somatic effects that both demonic and divine spirits have on humans and, more specifically, on female visionaries. Indeed, in late medieval theological thought, women are considered “the weaker vessel”⁷³ and, hence, more prone to supernatural influence.⁷⁴

Physiological reasons are given in support of such representations. Using Aristotelian and Galenic vocabularies, natural philosophers such as Albert the Great (d. 1280) and Bartholomew the Englishman (d. 1272), among others, naturalize gender differences. All creatures, they argue, consist of four elements (fire, air, water, and earth) which have four qualities (hot, cold, moist, and dry). The latter lay the foundation for four humors (yellow bile, black bile, phlegm, and blood) and contribute to the formation of four temperaments or dispositions (choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic, sanguine).⁷⁵ The complexion of males is hot and dry whereas that of females moist and cold. In terms of humors, males are primarily dominated by yellow bile and blood while phlegm and black bile characterize the female constituency. The different constituency of humors and complexions in sexes naturally leads to intellectual and moral differences. Albert the Great considers that women’s complexion of coldness diminishes their intellectual

capacities which is the reason for which women are of a weaker intellect.⁷⁶ The moist complexion, argues Albert, makes them inconstant, makes them look for novelty, and impressionable: “the complexion of a woman is more moist than the man’s and moistness receives an impression easily, but retains it poorly.”⁷⁷ Women differ from men in terms of their temperament as well because the proportion of humors in their bodies is balanced out differently. If men are primarily dominated by yellow bile and blood, the predominant humors in women are phlegm and black bile. The latter, if in excess, is responsible for the existence of a melancholic personality and, hence, of a self-centered and hysteric type of subject. In addition, the presence of phlegm endows women with a phlegmatic temperament and, thus, assigns them certain characteristics such as sluggishness and dullness.⁷⁸

Differences in complexion, humoral configuration, and temperament are, therefore, quintessential in legitimizing sex differences and, as Dyan Elliott⁷⁹ and Nancy Caciola⁸⁰ have noticed, in pathologizing⁸¹ female spirituality. Indeed, women’s moist complexion together with their melancholic temperament predisposes them to supernatural influences which theologians often dismiss as belonging to the realm of illusion and fantasy. Such is the case with William of Auvergne (d.1249), bishop of Paris, who considers that a particular aspect of female physiology, namely their “impressionability” due to their cold complexion, makes them more open to mystical behavior: “many of these visions and fantasies are produced in many people by the illness of melancholia. This is especially true with women, just as is the case with true visions and revelations. And the reason is, in addition to what the doctors say, the nature of female souls—namely, from the fact that they are far easier of impression than male souls.”⁸² Furthermore, in addition to women’s impressionability, their melancholic temperament is invoked to question the veracity of certain states of rapture and to naturalize symptoms of melancholia such as irrational fears or suicidal thoughts as preponderantly being characteristic to women.

Such predilection for “questionable” mystical behavior is explained not only through the lenses of humoral theory and particular complexions but also invoking medical arguments. In this sense, certain diseases such as the suffocation of the womb or hysteria are to be accounted for the medicalization and, implicitly, pathologization of states of raptures. Pseudo-Albert the Great (d. 1280) in *The Secrets of Women*, following Hippocrate and other medieval figures such as Constantine the African, Galen, and Trotula,⁸³ argues that the uterus is not attached but is attracted by the upper parts of the body. The suffocation happens when the uterus hits the heart because of the accumulation of menstrual blood and thick humors.⁸⁴ This state is called “ecstasy” and manifests itself through trance-like symptoms:

Women who suffered this illness lie down as if they were dead. Old women who have recovered from it say that it was caused by an ecstasy during which they were snatched out of their bodies and borne to heaven or to hell, but this is ridiculous. The illness happens from natural causes, however they think they have been snatched out of their bodies because vapors raise to the brain. If these vapors are very thick and cloudy, it appears to them they are in hell and that they see black demons; if the vapors are light, it seems to them they are in heaven and that they see God and his angels shining brightly.⁸⁵

According to Pseudo-Albert the Great, therefore, catatonic trance states, associated to a certain religious experience, may be provoked by a particular medical condition and, consequently, subject to skepticism. Other natural philosophers such as William of Auvergne advance a similar line of thought and pathologize the act of rapture. Symptoms that characterize religious ecstasy and trance like states originate in fact, argues William, in other medical conditions such as brain damage, madness, or simply illness. These are provoked because of the corruption of the humors “either from exterior things or from vapors released interiorly from the body and ascending to the brain which then fix certain passions and impressions onto the perceptive organs in the brain.”⁸⁶ According to William, demons can also provoke some of these internal physiological changes by “approaching these organs and imprinting similar passions upon them through their own effort.”⁸⁷ In this logic, symptoms of rapture and religious ecstasy are, therefore, very similar to those of demonic possession and to other mental illnesses.

Indeed, catatonic states, stiffness of limbs, prolonged states of crying, refusal to speak, lamentations, severe fasting, singing and shouting could be symptoms of divine revelations or, on the contrary, of demonic influence. For instance, according to Thomas of Cantimpré (d. 1272), when a beguine such as Christina the Astonishing immerses herself in intense moments of praying and contemplation, her body is in a trance like state with her limbs all immobile: “when she prayed and the divine grace of contemplation descended upon her, all her limbs were gathered together into a ball as if they were hot wax, and all that could be perceived of her was a round mass.”⁸⁸ Such corporeal language was deciphered as symptomatic for a state of demonic possession instead of being revelatory of divine influence: “her sisters and friends were greatly embarrassed because of these and similar things, for people thought she was possessed by demons.”⁸⁹ Showing sexual anxiety when in the presence of men and seeking absolute solitude are equally pathologized and qualified as demonic influence.⁹⁰ Moreover, while states of rapture are characterized by uncontrolled movements followed by catatonic states, singing, or shouting,⁹¹ demonic possession displays the same

etiology. Johannes Nider (d. 1438) mentions the case of a young woman who was rolling on the ground because she was tormented by a demon.⁹² Thomas of Cantimpré refers to a nun in an advanced catatonic condition: her limbs were extremely rigid whereas the mouth was sealed and could not be opened. All these symptoms were provoked by the presence of a demon inside her body.⁹³ Female visionaries themselves are at times skeptical about the origin of their revelations and become extremely attentive to the somatic aspect of their devotional experiences. They communicate to their male confessors the bodily sensations they experience in the presence of supernatural encounters. Ermine of Reims (d. 1396), for instance, avows to her confessor Jean le Graveur that while in a state of mystical revelation she experienced visions, the origins of which she is skeptical about. At a bodily level, she acknowledges that her experience was divine in origin; yet, “her spirit was so terrified that she trembled all over.”⁹⁴

Feeling the demons or the divine spirits becomes, therefore, not only a self-reflexive act but a collective type of evaluative gesture as well. That is why, at the end of the 14th century, theologians start coining vocabularies meant to decode and categorize such somatic symptoms. It is under the umbrella of discernment of spirits (*discretio spirituum*) that these symptoms are categorized as divine or demonic. Originating in the biblical adage “Test the spirits to see whether they are of God” (John 4:1), the concept of *discretio spirituum* was theoretically prepared by Augustine for whom visions and spirits do exist and are direct signs of the Christian faith.⁹⁵ A more formal aspect of discernment, however, comes from the university milieu.⁹⁶ Pierre d’Ailly (d. 1420), Henri of Freimer (d. 1340), and Henry of Langestein (d. 1397), masters at the University of Paris, are the initiators of the genre of treatises on discernment of spirits. What is at stake in these texts is the elaboration of a set of formal criteria according to which spiritual gestures can be diagnosed as divine, demonic, or human. They start from the presupposition that spiritual discernment is a gift as Paul’s experience attests (1 Cor. 12.10). Yet personal background including social status and other factors and circumstances are equally important in validating particular supernatural experiences.⁹⁷ Moreover, as Dyan Elliott argues, gender is also an important criterion for the authors of these treatises.⁹⁸ Males’ mystical and prophetic activities tended to be placed under a different type of scrutiny if their authors occupy a particular rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁹⁹ In the case of female visionaries, the gift of discernment just like any other type of spiritual activity raises a lot of skepticism and, often, is examined through “the lenses of the hostile, inquisitorial techniques of scholastic methodology.”¹⁰⁰

Without carrying out the role of an inquisitor as such, Jean Gerson (d. 1429), chancellor of the University of Paris, Church reformer, and protégé of

both d'Ailly and Langestein,¹⁰¹ nevertheless designs such an inquisitorial, almost forensic type of schema through which a theologian can assess somatic signs as divine or demonic in nature. In the treatise *On the Proving of Spirits* [De Probatione spirituum] (1415),¹⁰² written as a reaction to the religious activities of Brigitte of Sweden (d. 1373), Gerson starts from the presumption that the notion of “discernment of spirits” is in fact an “investigation of spirits.”¹⁰³ Depicting who is divinely rather than demonically possessed is, therefore, a rather objective, quasi-scientific endeavor that produces its own principles of inquiry which Gerson condenses in a couplet:

Tu, quis, quid, quare,
Cui, qualiter, unde, require.

*Who is it to whom the revelation is made? What does the revelation itself mean and to what does it refer? Why is it said to have taken place? To whom was it manifested for advice? What kind of life does the visionary lead? Whence does the revelation originate?*¹⁰⁴

In this framework, determining the nature of a particular spiritual experience is contingent not upon personal will, validated through *mens*, as Augustine would have wanted, but upon an exterior authority. For Gerson, this authority is undoubtedly the theologian who possesses the institutional mark, that is, the “gift of the Holy Spirit,” through which he can spot subjects that are under a genuine divine revelation. Moreover, certain qualities are required, Gerson argues, in this process such as deep biblical knowledge¹⁰⁵ and an inward perception that allows the theologian to depict in an empirical way who is divinely and who is demonically possessed by observing certain characteristics like “sweet taste” or “supernatural illumination.”¹⁰⁶

At the end of the Middle Ages the figure of the possessed enters, therefore, the forensic constraints that the discourse of the discernment of spirits presupposes. Praxis and assessment are prevalent and, as Nancy Caciola puts it,¹⁰⁷ the body of the demoniac just like that of the mystic becomes a cipher awaiting to be examined by sovereign theological voices that ask the kind of questions that Gerson formulates as part of the process of discernment of spirits. In other words, finding and categorizing the signs becomes a central gesture in producing the subjectivity of the demoniac. The latter does not exist outside the mechanisms of a power/knowledge schema, to use a Foucauldian vocabulary,¹⁰⁸ in which the Church as a sovereign power uses its own network of apparatuses to shape knowledge and expertise in order to create a specific type of subject formation. In this logic, a divinely possessed person is labeled as such by a churchman who not only has the

authority guaranteed by his position in the ecclesiastic system, but simultaneously the instruments that consolidate the system: thorough knowledge of the Bible and an inward vocation (“gift of the Holy Spirit”, in Gerson’s terminology). These tools manufacture a keen religious sense enabling the churchman to observe and categorize the behavior of subjects judging by the signs displayed at the level of their spiritual and bodily traits.

This imprint of sovereignty in evaluating the symptoms of possession and in creating a pathology of the demoniac becomes perhaps even more visible when the agent of demonic possession is the witch. Indeed, in the second half of the 15th century the theological discourse about possession interestingly coalesces with that on witchcraft.¹⁰⁹ In *Malleus maleficarum* [The Hammer of Witches] (1486), one of the foundational texts of European witchcraft, authored by the Dominican friar Jacobus Sprenger and an unnamed collaborator, presumably another Dominican friar named Henricus Institoris,¹¹⁰ the phenomenon of demonic possession was justified and explicated through the prism of witchcraft. In this seminal text, possession is still interpreted within the theological parameters established in the 12th and the 13th centuries: demons can physically be present in the body. However, for the authors of *Malleus* the body is not just a uniform entity but composed of its “essence” (the defining characteristic which the physical material of the body receives from the soul) and “mass,” that is, its physical material. In this schema, the soul is localized within the body, but in its essence and not in its mass.¹¹¹ Given this bodily model, demons cannot invade the essence of the body but only its mass.¹¹² Witches, argue the authors of *Malleus*, help demons inhabit humans substantially.¹¹³ A demoniac is, hence, a victim because his or her bodily integrity has traumatically been overtaken by the witch. In fact, possession is equated to an illness inflicted, obviously, by witches:

I began to have doubts in my mind and interjected that he was not under assault, and instead something had happened to him because of an illness. The son then told the story himself and indicated in what way and for how long he had been under assault. “A certain woman,” he said, “who was a sorceress gave me this illness. When I was quarreling with her because of some displeasure with the parish administration and I upbraided her rather harshly because she was of an obstinate disposition, she said that after a few days I would have to pay attention to the things that would happen to me. The demon living in me also tells the same story that a device for sorcery was placed under a certain tree by the sorceress and if it is not removed it will not be possible for me to be freed, but he is unwilling to point out the tree.”¹¹⁴

With witchcraft treatises such as *Malleus* witches are, therefore, instrumental in the phenomenon of demonic possession as agents that are in direct, often sexual, contact with demons. The somatic signs that placed holy women and mystics in a sort of ambiguous position between angelic and demonic influence become a theological certainty in the case of the witch who is unmistakably conceptualized as embracing the views and praxis of a heretical movement, that is the “sect of witches.”¹¹⁵ Furthermore, with the witch as a facilitator and, at times, as an inflictor of demonic possession, the pathology of female spirituality enters a stricter regulatory phase on the part of theologians. Looking for the devil’s mark on the body of the witch or forcing confessions out of potential witches¹¹⁶ represent means of confirming certain theological anxieties regarding female sexuality, the existence of demons, or religious skepticism.¹¹⁷

The main presupposition that informed this chapter is that in medieval theological thought the notion of demonic possession can hardly be regarded as a universal category, but has a complex conceptual trajectory. Therefore, I have investigated the multilayered perspectives and practices that produced possession as a discursive entity by looking for both similarities and discontinuities in the modalities through which individual theological voices and/or institutions conceptualized and disseminated ideas of demonic possession as a knowledge-object. During the first centuries of Christianity, theologians focused their attention on settling a proper ontological and heuristic background and language to conceptualize the demoniac and his or her affliction as a true object of knowledge. In terms of vocabulary, we have seen that a series of denominations for possession and possessed people came into being at that time: *obsessio*, *vexatio*, *arreptitio*, *daemoniacus*, *energumeni*, *possessio*, *daemonium habentes*. Via this specialized language, the theologico-intellectual voices of the Patristic period diagnosed and distinguished demonic possession from other similar phenomena like madness or mania. Central to the intellectual thought of this period was the fact that demonic possession is not simply characterized by a series of external features, but is equally typified by internal causes stemming from a complex relation between the body, the soul, and the spirit. Furthermore, I have shown that in the following centuries, theologians focused precisely on this internal aspect of demonic possession. Indeed, in the context of the increased role of medicine within theological thought, the notion of possession starts to be explicated in relation to a dense theory about the interior of the human being in which, physiologically, the heart (or rather the vital spirit) dominated the body and, spiritually, the Trinity filled in the inside of the same body. Thus demonic presence within the human body comes to be treated as both a

physiological and theological issue: demons can attack the body generically, but not the heart. Starting with the scholastic period, theologians are still interested in how demons affect and reside in specific portions of the human bodies like the bowels; however, the accent tended to be on the signs that demons left on the exterior of the human body. In other words, we notice a shift from the interior to exterior of the body at the level of the visibility of signs. Moreover, given the greater variety of sources about possession such as *exempla* produced starting with the 13th century, we also witness the understanding of the notion of demonic possession as a phenomenon that affects the structures of daily life on a large scale. Consequently, in a significant portion of 13th century sources, we notice the emergence of a true regime of recognition consisting of both physical and psychological traits characterizing a demoniac. The 13th century is also the period when the surface of the body defiled by demons starts to enter a forensic regime of examination. This tendency becomes predominant at the end of the Middle Ages when theologians focus their attention on elaborating a series of strategies by means of which various forms of female spirituality can be explicated, produced, and controlled.

The next chapter will investigate how and to what extent the Passion Plays, written and staged in France, between roughly 1450 and 1550, adopted this theological discourse into a representational schema. To be sure, I start from the presupposition that mystery plays do not mimetically replicate certain theological commonalities in connection with the notion of possession, but rather that, in the process of staging and endowing the demoniac with a “voice,” it produces something more—an excess accruing from discourse as it were. Indeed, this chapter will focus on the performative modalities through which theological knowledge about demonic possession is understood, internalized, evaluated, and, rendered graspable by subjects in their daily life social structures and practices through theater. I will also investigate how traces of a “voice” that is other can be ethically encountered through a symptomatic reading of the tensions that the form and content of the plays attempt to contain.

Notes

1. Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2003); Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female*

- Spirituality and Inquisitorial Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).
2. Dyan Elliott argues that late medieval inquisitorial efforts in trials of canonization of female saints led to the “pathologization of female spirituality.” In this process, the somatic aspect of female spirituality, visible through trances, convulsions, and catatonic states, is exposed to an inquisitorial assessment for validation. See Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 119–297; Dyan Elliott, “Flesh and Spirit: The Female Body,” in *Medieval Holy women in the Christian Tradition c. 1100-c. 1500*, eds. Alistair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 13–46.
 3. Tertullian, *Apology*, trans. T. R. Glover (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931).
 4. Tertullian, *Apology*.
 5. Tertullian, *Apology*: “(...) they are recognized more in the consequences of their action than in their action itself” (22. 5).
 6. Tertullian, *Apology*, 22.6.
 7. John Cassian, *The Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (New York: Paulist Press, 1997).
 8. Jean Cassien, *Institutions cénobitiques*, trans. and ed. J.-Cl. Guy, vol. 109 (Paris: Cerf, 1965).
 9. For a reception of Cassian’s ideas throughout the Middle Ages and the early-modern period see Michel Olphe-Galliard, “Jean Cassian,” *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 2 (1937–1940): 267–75. His ideas on how demons attack the interior of the body is mentioned and analyzed by all major theological and philosophical figures of the early and late Middle Ages such as Rupert of Deutz, Thomas Aquinas and Johannes Nider.
 10. Cassian, *The Conferences*: “This air which is spread out between heaven and earth is so thick with spirits, which do not fly about in it quietly and aimlessly, that divine providence has quite beneficially withdrawn them from human sight. For human beings, utterly unable to gaze upon these things with fleshly eyes, would be overwhelmed by an unbearable dread and faint away because of their frightening confluence and their horrible expression that they can take upon themselves and assume at will” (VIII. 12.1).
 11. Cassian, *The Conferences*, VII, 13.1.
 12. Cassian, *The Conferences*, VII, 10.1.
 13. Cassian, *The Conferences*, VII, 12.1.
 14. Aristotle, *De anima*, Book 2 and 3, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 535–603.
 15. Cassian, *The Conferences*, VII, 12.1.
 16. Cassian, *The Conferences*, VII, 13.1.
 17. Cassian, *The Conferences*, VII, 13.1.

18. Saint Augustine, *La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres*, trans., introduction and notes P. Agaësse and A. Solignac (Paris: Desclée De Brouver, 1972) (from now *Genèse*); *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary of the Genesis, The Literal meaning of Genesis*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill in: *The Works of Saint Augustine* 13 (New York: New City Press, 1990). I am using the French edition to quote the original text in Latin and the Rotelle edition for its translation into English.
19. G. Verbeke, *L'évolution de la doctrine du pneuma du stoicisme à Saint Augustin* (Paris: Desclée, 1945), 489–508.
20. John H. Taylor, "The meaning of *spiritus* in St. Augustine's *De Genesi* XII," *The Modern Schoolman* 26 (1949): 211–19.
21. For a detailed analysis on spiritual seeing see Barbara Newman, "What Did It Mean to Say 'I Saw'? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture," *Speculum* 80 (2005): 1–43.
22. Jackie Pigeaud, *Folie et cures de la folie chez les médecins de l'antiquité greco-romaine: la manie* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1987). For a very rich analysis concerning the influence of classical and late-Roman medical thought on the Christian discourse about possession, see Aline Rousselle, *Croire et guérir: la foi en Gaule dans l'Antiquité tardive* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), esp. 133–53; Jacqueline Amat, *Songes et visions: l'au-delà dans la littérature latine tardive* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1985), 185–361.
23. Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, 142.
24. Augustine, *On Genesis*, XII, 13.28.
25. Augustine, *On Genesis*, XII, 13. 28: "...the evil spirit acts as it were in a quieter manner, and without any harassment of the body says what it can through the human spirit it has taken over, or even when it says things that are true and makes useful announcements, transforming itself, as it is written, like an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), with the intention of first winning people's confidence in manifestly good matters and then seducing them to their own ends."
26. Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, 142. Rousselle points out that the Christian possessed is not simply the madman categorized as such in classical medical thought, but somebody that suffers from the error of the spirit. The Christian possessed, including the Augustinian demoniac, make errors about themselves and the surrounding reality.
27. According to Rousselle, *Croire et guérir*, 134–35, the word *energumen* represents the past participle of the Greek verb to "act" (*energeia*). The verb derives from a noun signifying "energy", "power of God and of celestial deities." The demon is, therefore, the one agent that "acts" the *energumen*.
28. "*Adrepticis*" derives from the Latin verb *a(d)rrepo* which means to "creep" or "move slowly to."
29. The following analysis about the function of the *spiritus* in connection to the body, intellect, and the soul has been informed by the following monographs and articles: Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction*

- to *Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1990), 78–109; James J. Bono, “Medical Spirits and the Medieval Language of Life,” *Traditio* 40 (1984): 91–130; Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 176–95; Ruth Harvey, *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, 1975); Heather Webb, *The Medieval Heart* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2010), esp. 10–49; Ineke van’t Spijker, *Fictions of the Inner Life: Religious Literature and Formation of the Self in the Eleventh and Twelfth Century* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004); Alain Boureau, *Des Vagues individus: la condition humaine dans la pensée scolastique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2008), esp. 19–154; *Medieval Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Medieval Period*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); M.-D. Chenu, “*Spiritus*: Vocabulaire de l’âme au XIIe siècle,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 41 (1957): 209–32 and *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, ed. and trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Bernard McGinn, “Introduction,” in *Three Treatises on Man: A Cistercian Anthropology*, ed. Bernard McGinn (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 1–93.
30. Bono, “Medical Spirits,” 97.
 31. “Anatomia Magistri Nicolai Physici” in: *Anatomical Texts of Earlier Middle Ages: A Study in the Transmission of Culture*, ed. and trans. George W. Corner (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1927), 76.
 32. William of St. Thierry, “The Nature of the Body and the Soul,” in *Three Treatises on Man*, 113.
 33. William of St. Thierry, “The Nature of the Body and the Soul,” 115.
 34. Bono, “Medical Spirits,” 99.
 35. Boureau, *Vagues Individus*, 60.
 36. William of St. Thierry, “The Nature,” 141.
 37. For a brief discussion regarding the reception of Alcher’s text in the Middle Ages see Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 182.
 38. Alcher of Clairvaux, “On the Spirit and Soul,” in *Three Treatises on Man*, 199.
 39. “On the Spirit and Soul,” in *Three Treatises on Man*, 183–85.
 40. “On the Spirit and Soul,” in *Three Treatises on Man*, 184.
 41. Isaac of Stella, “Letter on the Soul,” in *Three Treatises on Man*, 171.
 42. William of St. Thierry, “The Nature,” in *Three Treatises on Man*, 146.
 43. William of St. Thierry, “The Nature,” in *Three Treatises on Man*, 146.
 44. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 190.
 45. Alcher of Clairvaux, “On the Spirit and Soul,” in *Three Treatises on Man*, p. 222.
 46. Alcher of Clairvaux, “On the Spirit and Soul,” in *Three Treatises on Man*, 224: “since only an unfaithful spirit can undergo such a corruption, it thinks that the things are happening to it in the body rather than in the intellectual soul. But it is a stupid and blunted person who can believe that the things happening to him in the spirit are also happening in the body.”

47. Alcher of Clairvaux, "On the Spirit and Soul," in *Three Treatises on Man*, 223.
48. Peter Lombard, *The Sentences*, trans. Giulio Silano (Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007), Book 2, Distinction VIII, Chapter 4 (46), 38.
49. Hildegard of Bingen, *Vita*, III. ii. 45 quoted in *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, vol. 1, trans. Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 150–51.
50. Hildegard of Bingen, *The Letters*, 45.
51. Rupert de Deutz, *Les Oeuvres du Saint-Esprit*, trans. and ed. Elisabeth de Solms (Paris: Cerf, 1967, Sources Chrétiennes, 131), 150: "Spiritus Sanctus animae *substantiam substantialiter* ingreditur, eamque ineffabiliter et dilatando complet et complendo dilatat, in ea substantialiter inhabitat atque inambulat."
52. Rupert de Deutz, *Les Œuvres*, 150: "spiritus malignus non ipsi humani spiritus substantiae substantialiter infunditur."
53. See Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 176–222. Early Christian hagiographers like Sulpicius Severus (d. 425), for instance, in his *Life of Saint Martin*, already alluded to the material existence of demons in the excretory tracts in Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, ed. and trans. Jacques Fontaine (Paris: Cerf, Sources Chrétiennes, 1967), vol. 1, VI 17. 7, p. 289.
54. Cesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue on Miracles*, 2 vols, trans. H. von E. Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929), 335.
55. Gerald of Wales, *The Jewel of the Church*, trans. John J. Hagen (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 45.
56. Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale de apibus* (Douai, 1624), 2. 36. 4, 386–87.
57. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 207.
58. Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages*, trans. Rosemary Morris (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990).
59. Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery*, 147.
60. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 42.
61. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* quoted in Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery*, 150.
62. *Ménagier de Paris* quoted in Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery*, 150.
63. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 42–43.
64. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 42.
65. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue*, 354.
66. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend* quoted in Pouchelle, *Body and Surgery*, 151.
67. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue on Miracles* 11, 332.
68. *Vita B. Columbae Reatinae* quoted in Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 43.
69. *Antico processo della beata Chiara da Montefalco* quoted in Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 43.
70. Hammer of Witches: *A Complete Translation of the Malleus maleficarum*, ed. and trans. Christopher S. Mackay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2nd part 129 C.

71. Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), *Article 8, Answer*, 493.
72. Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibeta*, q. II, art. 8 quoted in Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 197.
73. Johannes Nider, *Formicarius*, Book 3, Chapter 1 quoted in Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 212: "The fire of devotion is more mobile in the heart of the weaker vessel, and more likely to burst forth in clamors."
74. Joan Cadden, *The Meaning of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); Dyan Elliott, "The Physiology of Rapture and Female Spirituality," in *Medieval Theology and Natural Body*, eds. Peter Biller and Alastair Minnis (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1997), 141–73; *Proving Woman*, 203–11; "Flesh and Spirit," 13–46; Nancy Caciola and Moshe Sluhovskiy, "Spiritual Physiologies: The Discernment of Spirits in Medieval and Early-Modern Europe," *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 1 (2012): 1–48; Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 140–61.
75. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 142–51; Cadden, *The Meaning of Sex Difference*, 183–88; Albert the Great, *Questions Concerning Aristotle's On Animals*, trans. Irven M. Resnick and Kenneth F. Kitchell (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008).
76. Albertus Magnus, *Questiones de animalibus*: "the coldness of complexion in the woman diminishes her perceptive abilities...and in consequence she is of the weaker intellect." 15.6.
77. Albertus Magnus, *Questiones de animalibus* 15. 11
78. For a more detailed discussion about the role of humors in naturalizing sex difference see Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 142–43.
79. Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 206–07.
80. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 146–47.
81. The term is coined by Elliott in *Proving Woman*, 203–19.
82. William of Auvergne, *De universo* pt 2, 3, c. 20, in *Opera* 1:1054 quoted in Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 206.
83. Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, 173–77.
84. Helen Rodnite Lemay, *Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' De Secretis Mulierum with Commentaries* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 132.
85. Lemay, *Women's Secrets*, 134.
86. William of Auvergne, *De Universo*, 1041 quoted in Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 149.
87. William of Auvergne, *De Universo*, 1041 quoted in Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 150.
88. Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints' Lives: Abbot John of Cantimpré, Christina the Astonishing, Margret of Ypres, and Lutgard of Aywières*, ed. and with an introduction

- by Barbara Newman, trans. Margot H. King and Barbara Newman (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 136.
89. Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints' Lives*, 137.
 90. Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints' Lives*, 13: "Christina fled the presence of men with wondrous horror into deserted places (...) thinking her to be filled with demons the people finally managed to capture her with great effort and to bind her with iron chains."
 91. Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints' Lives*, 145–46: "she would speak of Christ and suddenly and unexpectedly she would be ravished in the spirit and her body would whirl around like a hoop in a children's game. She whirled around with such extreme violence that the individual limbs of her body could not be distinguished (...) then there sounded between her throat and her breast a wondrous harmony (...) no sound or breath came out of her mouth or nose during this time but a harmony of the angelic voice resounded only from between her breast and throat. While all this was happening, all her limbs were quiet and her eyes were closed as if she was sleeping. Then after a while, restored to herself somewhat, she rose up like one who was drunk—indeed she was drunk—and cried aloud."
 92. Nider, *Formicarius* (Cologne, 1480), Book 5, Chapter 5.21.
 93. Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints' Lives*, 247: "the nun's hands and limbs contracted with an overpowering rigidity, and her mouth was close so firmly that it could not be opened at all, not even with a knife."
 94. "The Visions of Ermine de Reims," trans. *The Strange Case of Ermine de Reims: A Medieval Woman between Demons and Saints* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 163–64.
 95. Augustine, *On Genesis*; Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernments of Spirits in the Writing of late-medieval Women Visionaries* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1999), 46–47.
 96. Wendy Love Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits: Assessing Visions and Visionaries in the Late Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 159–89.
 97. Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 257–63.
 98. Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 262–63.
 99. Henry of Langestein, *De discretione*, quoted in Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits*, 174: "When it is therefore doubted whether certain visions or miracles come from a good spirit, it must be considered what state or grade in the ecclesiastical hierarchy the visionary had or used to have—so that if he is a prelate, if a high official, if a doctor by authority of the Church, if he has been legitimately sent by the Church or sent in a special way by God in order to do those things which he introduces. And he is required to teach about his mission either through authentic letters or evident miracles or numerous outcomes from his prophecies."
 100. Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 236–37.

101. For Gerson's reformist activities see D. Hobbins, "The Schoolman as a public intellectual: Jean Gerson and the late medieval tract," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 5 (2003): 1308–337. For Gerson's theological complexities regarding the notion of the "discernment of spirits" see Karen Sullivan, *The Interrogation of Joan of Arc* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 32–41; Anderson, *The Discernment of Spirits*, 190–217; Elliott, *Proving Woman*, 264–96.
102. John Gerson, *The Concept of "Discretio spirituum" in Jean Gerson's "De probatione spirituum" and "De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis,"* trans. Paschal Boland (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1959); Jean Gerson, "On distinguishing true from false revelations," in *Jean Gerson: Early Works*, trans. Brian Patrick McGuire (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 334–64.
103. Gerson, *The Concept of "Discretio spirituum,"* 30.
104. Gerson, *The Concept of "Discretio spirituum,"* 30.
105. Gerson, *The Concept of "Discretio spirituum,"* 27: "One of these ways is to use the wisdom and general knowledge acquired from diligent and serious study of Holy Scripture."
106. Gerson, *The Concept of "Discretio spirituum,"* 26.
107. Caciola and Sluhovsky, "Spiritual Physiologies," 8.
108. For more on power/knowledge see Foucault's "Society Must be Defended," in *Lectures at Collège de France, 1975–1976*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 7–40.
109. For a challenging difference between the witch and the possessed see Michel Foucault's lecture at Collège de France "Cours du 26 février 1975," in *Les Anormaux: Cours au Collège de France. 1974–1975*, eds. François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1999), 187–215. Foucault considers that the witch's body is characterized by invisibility whereas that of the possessed is marked by the various traces that the devil leaves on the surface of the body, 196–97.
110. *The Hammer of Witches*, 2–6.
111. *The Hammer of Witches*, Part II, 130A: "We can say that the body has two sorts of boundary, one of mass and one of essence, and hence when any angel, whether good or evil, works within the boundaries of the body, he works within the boundaries of the body's mass. This is how he slides into the body when he works on the faculties of the mass. This is also how good angels work visions of the imagination in good people. They are never said to slide into the essence of the body, however, either as a part or as a virtue, because they do not have these powers. (...) Hence, God alone controls the entire working and preservation of the essence for so long as it pleases."
112. *The Hammer of Witches*, Part II, 130A: "because the demon could slide into the body (and not into the soul, since this is possible for God alone), he does slide into the body, though not within the boundaries of the essence of the body. This, I say, explains how demons sometimes inhabit humans in substance."

113. The Hammer of Witches, Part II, 126B: “it is nonetheless set down to ensure that no one will think it impossible that with God’s permission humans are in fact inhabited by demons in substance at the insistence of sorceresses.”
114. The Hammer of Witches, Part II, 127D-128A.
115. Richard Kieckheffer, “Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century,” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 1 (2006): 79–107.
116. Virginia Krause, *Witchcraft, Demonology, and Confession in Early Modern France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
117. Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

The Voice of the Possessed

The Burgundian chronicler Jean Molinet (d. 1507) recounts that during the Easter ceremony of the year 1491, a strange event took place in a reformed Augustinian convent situated near the small town of Cambrai in northern France. According to the ecclesiastical authorities called upon to interpret the case, Molinet relates, several of the nuns residing in the convent displayed extremely bizarre behavior. They rolled their eyes, jumped in the air, and spoke in tongues. One of them sang a song in a hideous voice while another had sexual encounters with the devil that took the shape of her confessor with whom the young girl had already been in love.¹ Upon examination of the nuns,² the churchmen reach the conclusion that the nuns are possessed:

Aulcuns espritz ou ennemys diabolicques se logerent en ung monesteres de religieuses reformede de l'ordre de Saint Augustin. Il y avoit illec environ cent femmes bien renommes de tres devote et honeste conversation; mais plusieurs d'icelles furent successivement traveillies et vexes tant horriblement (...) [one of them] disoit des choses merveilleuses, incroyables et espouvantable a ceulx qui l'interroguoient, detordoit les membres de son corps, sautoit en l'air, contournoit ses yeulx fort estrangement et espouvantoit ung chanson de sa tres hideuse voix.³

[Some spirits or diabolical enemies found shelter in a reformed convent of the order of Saint Augustine. There were there about one hundred women known for their very pious and honest behavior; but several of them were then thoroughly possessed and vexed so horribly (...) [one of them] uttered fantastical,

incredible, and horrifying things to those who interrogated her, writhing in every limb, jumping in the air, rolling her eyes very strangely and howling a song in her very hideous voice.]

From Molinet's account we notice that the physical symptoms of possession consisting of convulsionary states and disarticulated language transform the nuns into an object not only of examination and forensic interrogation, but also of disgust. What horrifies and troubles the churchmen and Molinet himself are corporeal symptoms (rolling the eyes, writhing the limbs, jumping in the air) and the voice of the possessed nuns both as signified (*what is said*) and as signifier (*how it is said*). The latter perhaps even more than the other bodily symptoms which are more volatile in their manifestation leaves a material trace that troubles the ordinary. The nuns' howling and their so-called hideous voices do not resemble anything recognizable; they cannot be captured within ordinary linguistic, semantic, and gestural patterns. That is why external authorities, including Molinet himself, intervene to diagnose this type of speech associated with a particular type of behavior. They know what provokes them: demonic presence. However, they do not understand the algorithm of this idiom. They can perceive only the plethora of effects—ranging from bewilderment to horror—the nuns' voice has on them.

The attitude of the Cambrai churchmen is not unique. From Saint Augustine to 20th century philosophers, the very disharmonious dimension of the possessed voice blocks any interpretative effort to access the content of what the possessed actually utters.⁴ For this reason, Michel de Certeau argues that the speech of the possessed enters a reversed hermeneutical framework.⁵ In an ordinary speech act, argues de Certeau, the person who speaks has a stable identity, hence, articulate, interpretable speech. In the case of the possessed, however, this identity is confiscated, either by demons who speak through the mouth of the possessed, or by subjects like Molinet and his companions, who "interrogate" the possessed, suspending her persona in order to have access to what the demons say. In other words, the possessed person does not have the propriety of her identity and, therefore, of her speech. She is possessed by the Other, but dis-possessed of what makes her a human being: articulated speech.

As we have seen in Molinet's account, the voice of the possessed, in its utterance, functions on its own and produces negative aesthetic consequences, to say the least. But the same voice is also an autographic sign of afflicted subjects. Indeed, we are told only about the "fantastical, incredible, and horrifying things" the nuns utter. But the way in which nuns experience such affliction does not transpire in Molinet's account. Neither do the content and referential nature of

the nuns' utterances. In the previous chapter, we saw that speaking in tongues together with other bodily signs such as catatonic states and seizures, for instance, are valid features to route the possessed subject within the domain of pathological and forensic examination. This second chapter, in contrast, asks whether it would be possible to depathologize the speech of the possessed by looking into these linguistic and affective features translating the actual pain the demoniac feels—aspects which are absent in narratives such as those of Moliner's. The scenes of possession in mystery plays with their focus of an inchoate demonic "I" who narrates the pain associated with her vexation by demons are a particularly fertile ground to enable such restorative practices.

Two theoretical presuppositions animate such an approach. First, I argue that the speech of the possessed in the plays is not an idiom existing in itself but a performative one in Judith Butler's definition of the term functioning "not as a singular or deliberate act but, rather as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects it names."⁶ That means that *performativity* produces and, at the same time, re-produces the norm and, in addition, creates something else, something new, which nevertheless functions within the parameters of a normative discourse. This process does not necessarily presuppose the existence of a willing subject—an *I* that consciously and systematically reiterates the norm—but a subject endowed with agency who cultivates, argues Butler, a "reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power and not a relation external to power."⁷ Similarly, I argue that the vocabulary that the demoniac utilizes in the plays derives from a larger normative discourse that theologians, natural philosophers, and churchmen coined in the Middle Ages. Mystery plays encompass such acts of *performativity* centered on a demoniac who becomes an agential subject who reiterates, identifies with, and re-shapes knowledge about demonic possession. In addition to finding a heuristic scaffold such as *performativity* to have access at "what" the demoniac utters, the domain of "how" the possessed delivers her speech also requires further reflection. Indeed, what provokes horror in the churchmen who examined the possessed nuns are the tonality of their voice, the sound, and the loose verbal outbursts. All these inflexions of the voice are dissociated from "coherent" linguistic articulation.

Continuing explorations of the interdependence between rhetoric and subjectivity, I ask whether we can recuperate the hermeneutics of the speech of the possessed and to place it within a larger interpretation of the notion of "voice," understood as something distinct from articulated, verbal speech, *logos*.⁸ I will instead analyze the voice of the possessed through the theoretical lenses offered by what Paul Zumthor called "vocality," that is, "the whole of the activities and values that

belong to the voice as such, independently of language.”⁹ In this light, as Adriana Cavarero points out, through this conceptualization of “vocality,” voice can no longer be considered within the realm of logocentrism, that is, as simply a sonic vehicle that translates a mentally articulated discourse.¹⁰ In contrast, “vocality” allows us to interpret voice as an autographic sign, that is, a sonorous and acoustic modulation, translating a lived, pre-verbal experience of a particular subject—the possessed, in our case. My hypothesis is that we can recognize at least two valences for this type of voice, opposing logocentrism and understood through the prism of vocality: voice as verbal outbursts that express the emotional and physical pain of the possessed, and voice that translates the stream of consciousness experienced by the possessed. Such a trajectory will allow us to approach the figure of the possessed as having something other than an already-given identity as a possessed subject, in the way that both medieval authors and, to a large extent, contemporary medievalists have argued.¹¹ On the contrary, the in-depth study of the voice of the possessed has an ethical dimension. Indeed, it mirrors how the Other who is always spoken for—that is, the possessed—speaks to us and narrates her condition. Whereas the latter part of this chapter covers the domain of “vocality,” the former looks into that of performativity through which knowledge about demonic possession is reshaped within the aesthetic languages that mystery plays cultivate.

The Possessed in the French Mystery Plays

In comparison to the other characters that animate the mystery plays such as devils, Christ, saints, apostles, Jews, angels, the figures of the possessed are relatively less numerous. Yet, despite the fact that they display a certain number of common traits according to which they can be labeled as demoniacs, the possessed characters in the plays are not portrayed in a similar way, but have different statuses and carry out various roles. In the Northern French family of Passion Plays, there are three main categories of the possessed that derive without exception from the New Testament. The first is Herod the Great, King of Judea whom the New Testament (Matthew 2: 16–18) represents as the author of a gruesome episode of infanticide known as the “Massacre of the Innocents.” The infamous Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus’ twelve apostles and his betrayer, is the second major possessed figure encompassed in the Passion Plays. The episode of his possession occurs just before his suicidal death as the result of feeling remorse for betraying his master.

The third possessed is represented by the Canaanite woman’s daughter. According to the Gospel of Mathew (15: 21–28), where this character appears,

Jesus, as part of the miracles that he performed before reaching Jerusalem, chases the demons out of the possessed girl at the insistence of the Canaanite woman, her mother.

Both Herod and Judas are traditionally characters who transgress the ethical boundaries of Christian virtues and values. In their case, possession, which precedes their death, is a direct consequence of their moral fault and anti-Christian choices. Contrary to Herod and Judas, the daughter of the Canaanite's woman, appearing in the plays under the denomination of "La Fille de la Chananee," does not become a demoniac because of sinful behavior. Healing her reconfirms Jesus' power over the demons, and her spiritual and bodily reincorporation within the Christian circuit. The hagiographical plays are mostly dominated by the category of "good" demoniacs who, just like the Fille de la Chananee, are exorcised by saintly figures inspired by Christ's miracles and persona. In *Mystère de saint Remi*,¹² probably the play that encompasses the longest possession and exorcism scene in the corpus of French medieval drama, the demoniacs, Floquart and Fleury, two young members of high-status, can be healed only by Saint Remi and not by any other exorcist figure. Similarly, in Andrieu de la Vigne's *Mystère de saint Martin*,¹³ there are two possessed, the *Catecuminaire* and the *Desmonyacle*, who are exorcised by Martin in his endeavor to prove his saintly status. The same goes for the possessed in *Mystère de l'Institution de l'Ordre des Freres Prescheurs*¹⁴ where the healing of the devils' through exorcism is the prerogative of saintly figures.

The representations of demoniacs in mystery plays follow those already in place in earlier hagiographies,¹⁵ collections of miracles, and canonization trials.¹⁶ Just like in these accounts, in the plays the scenes of possession belong to a series of miracles that a particular saint performs as part of his and her *potentia* which legitimizes the existence of the respective cult. The plays also integrate a scenario of healing and possession which is similar to that contained in these narratives. The demoniac is usually accompanied by his or her parents, other close family members, simple witnesses, or subjects who are part of the same socio-professional community that the demoniac belongs to. In the Passion Plays, the mother and the caretaker of the demoniac girl accompany her while Jesus performs the exorcism. In some hagiographical plays, parents and close family members also take care of the possessed characters and take them to pilgrimage venues such as Rome where the saint exorcizes them. In other saints' plays, however, the demoniac is in the custody of strangers who simply happen to be around the possessed during his demonic attack. In plays such as *Mystère de l'Institution de l'Ordre des Freres Prescheurs*, the demoniac resides in a convent and, hence, is in the custody of the other members of the religious order. While in the non-dramatic narratives of possession, the

exorcism takes place at a saint's shrine¹⁷ or was already accomplished and presented as juridical proof during a trial of canonization, in the plays such exorcisms are performed *viva voce*.¹⁸ Yet their role is the same, namely, as Peter Brown remarks, to reintegrate the demoniac within his or her community.¹⁹ Indeed, not only does the saint confirm and re-confirm his or her *potentia*, but the "human being who had been swept away from the human community was solemnly reinstated among the warm mass of his fellows."²⁰ Similarly, in the plays, the possessed owes his or her recovery to the saint's *potentia* and, at the same time, becomes part of the Christian community and his or her social entourage again. For instance, in *Mystère de saint Remi*, after the saint cures the young demoniac, Fleury, she expresses her oath of allegiance towards Saint Remi and implicitly towards her Catholic community:

Mon chier seigneur, devotement
Vous doy reclaimer sans faintise [vv. 6931–6932]

Si plait a Dieu songneusement
Sans orgueil et sans convoitise
Vous serviray benignement
Avec Dieu et sainte Eglise
De richesse ne de cointise
Ne me chault plus, c'est porriture;
Ains est ma voulen   esprise
A vous servir sans forfaiture. [vv. 6939–6947]

[My Dear Lord, I have to invoke you devoutly without dissimulation [...] If God permits I will serve you well, carefully, without vanity and covetousness. In the world of God and the Church wealth and vanity have no importance to me, they are filth; this is my dearest desire to serve you without fault].

The same scenario occurs in *Mystère de saint Martin* where the Desmonyacle pays his homage first to God and then to Saint Martin:

Dieu eternal misericors,
A deux genoulx en ce lieu cy,
Puisque tes grans biens je recors,
Humblement je te rens mercy;
Samblablement a vous aussi,
Tressainct et tresdigne pasteur:
Du bien que m'avez fait icy
Je vous mercye de bon cueur.
Vous estes le reparateur
De ma grant miserable  . [vv. 7574–7583]

[Eternal merciful God, I am knelling in this place now, because I remember your good deeds, humbly I thank you; the same to you, very holy and worthy Father: for the good you did to me here I thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are the redeemer of my great misery].

After their exorcism, the demoniac enters a different existential circuit, one in which they renounce the mundane life in favor of an essentially spiritual existence. In this respect, the plays follow the efforts of late-medieval churchmen to instill piety into laity. The act of exorcism appears, thus, as a spiritual contract in which the possessed is taken out of demonic influence only to be transformed into what Johannes Nider (d. 1438) called a “soldier of Christ,” an attentive observer and practitioner of Catholic devotion.

In terms of vocabularies of possession that the plays utilize they resemble those that medieval theologians and natural philosophers shaped. As the previous chapter has shown, at the heart of the medieval discourse on possession is the idea that demons can inhabit humans. Such a conception triggered certain theological complexities that presupposed the existence of a particular schema in which the soul, the spirit, and the body enter into a hierarchical relation. Medieval theologians established that demons, as aerial creatures, cannot reside in the soul but in the lower parts of the body. Almost unanimously, the accounts of the demoniacs in the plays follow this theological trajectory: the devil is an exterior entity that abusively occupies the human body in its mass but not its substance. In their speech, both the possessed and the devils themselves assert and re-assert this aspect of the phenomenon of possession.

In Jean Michel’s *Passion*, one of the devils, Astaroth, complains that Jesus evicted (“vuider; ester mis hors” [vv. 8373–8374]) him out of the body of a young girl.²¹ Similarly, in *Mystère de saint Remi*, Satan mentions the case of Belzebus that Jesus drives out (“bouter hors” [v. 2120]) of Floquart’s body.²² In the same play, one character notices that the devil made its house (“habitable” [v. 2238]) in the body of the demoniac Floquart. Fleurie’s body is also the “house” of the devil as Satan’s himself states:

Vez ci mon chastel et ma tour
Mon donjon est ma forteresse;
Je y suis logiez des sa joneses
Ne m’en partiray jusqu’a lors
Que j’aray l’ame de son corps. [vv. 6719–6723]

[Here is my castle and my tower, my donjon and my fortress; I have been lodging here since her youth and I am not going to leave until I have her soul].

The devil is also driven out of the body (“getté de corps” [v. 8381]), as the young girl in Jean Michel’s *Passion* declares or even objects that it does need to leave the human body as the result of exorcism: “Faut il que je *vuide* (underline mine) ce lieu?” (Do I have to void/exit this place? [v. 3675]).²³ Not surprisingly then, mystery plays represent the image of the possessed as an open body where demons are lodged (“losgiés” [v. 12346]) and, through exorcism, evicted (“deslogés” [v. 12346]) as the case of Fergalus, one of the demons in Gréban’s *Passion*, shows.²⁴ In this sense, the plays do not essentially depart from larger normative discourses and scenarios of possession in which the demoniac is a subject whose interior and exterior bodily boundaries are attacked by demons. However, these vocabularies and patterns of possession are re-shaped and filtered through the codes of representation that the plays cultivate with their focus on orchestrating aesthetic tensions between the material and immaterial, presence and absence, theological truth and make believe.

An effective way of recuperating these codes is to have a close look at the numerous stage directions that accompany the scenes of possessions in the mystery plays together with the existing archival information that refers directly to this type of scenes and the props used in them. In all *Passion* Plays the stage directions immediately following the scene of Christ healing the possessed girl are quite rich and capacious and, thus, allow us to re-constitute the actual staging of scenarios of possession. In Mercadé’s *Passion* we read: “Cy est la femme de la Cananée a genoux devant Jhesus et on tient la fille a deux gens, laquelle est demoniacque, mais au commandement de Jhesus le dyable yssi hors de son corps”²⁵ [Here the daughter of the Canaanite’s woman kneels in front of Jesus and the girl, who is possessed, is held by two people, but at Jesus’ order the devil is getting out of her body]. In Jean Michel’s play the directions are even more graphic: “Icy sort une fumee et ung canon de dessoubtz la fille et Astaroth sort de la fille”²⁶ [There are fumes and a cannon and Astaroth jumps from underneath the girl]. In the director’s notebook of the *Mons Passion*, the same scene acquires an even more visual component by using “vuider” [void] instead of “sortir” [exit].²⁷ In a chronicle of Valenciennes—*Histoire de la ville et comté de Valenciennes* (1639)—written almost one hundred years later after the initial representation of the *Mystère de la Passion* in 1547, we find out that what entered the collective memory is precisely this visual and material aspect that mystery plays conferred on the representation of possession scenes:

Les secrets du Paradis, & de l’Enfer estoient tout à fait prodigieux, & capables d’estre pris par la populace pour enchantements. Car l’on voyoit la Verité, les Anges, & divers autres personages descendre de bien haut, tontost visiblement, autrefois comme invisibles, puis paroistre tout à coup; de l’Enfer Lucifer s’eslevoit, sans qu’on vist comment, porté sur un Dragon (...) les ames

de Herodes, & de *Iudas* estoient emportées en l'air par le Diables; les Diables chases des corps, (...) le tout d'une façon admirable.²⁸

[The special effects for Heaven and Hell were truly prodigious, and could really have been taken by the audience for magic spells. For one could see Lady Truth, the Angels, and various other characters descending from above, sometimes visibly, sometimes as if invisibly, and then appearing all of a sudden; Lucifer arose from Hell carried by a Dragon, without anyone seeing how [this happened] (...) the souls of Herod and Judas were taken up into the air by devils; and the devils were chased from the bodies (...) all of it done in a remarkable way].²⁹

The hagiographical mystery plays are also rich in such details. After the exorcism scene in *Mystère de saint Martin*, we read the following stage direction: "Icy doit avoir ung petit diableteau sortant de son lit, et s'en va en enfer, cryant et brailant comme ung deable"³⁰ [Here there must a little devil jumping out from underneath the bed, and goes to Hell, yelling and screaming like a devil].

According to these stage directions then, the possession scenes in the plays are articulated around the conception of presence or, rather, the making of presence. What sounded like an abstraction in the theologians' opinions about demons inhabiting the humans' bodies are materialized in theatre.³¹ Props like the cannon and the other *secrets* together with the performing body of the actors confer materiality and, hence, credibility to otherwise rather abstract notions. The mimesis that the mystery plays propose is, however, not simply a representation of a common scenario of a possessed person healed by an exorcism. Indeed, more than representation, mimesis can be interpreted as presence. I follow Michael Taussig's definition of mimesis³² here, which is based on James Frazer's concept of sympathetic or imitative magic. In this perspective, the copy and, additionally, any mimetic act "affect the original to such a degree that the representation shares in or acquires the properties of the represented."³³ Thus a copy is not just a copy, a simple signifier arbitrarily connected to its signified. Rather, in this logic, the referent and the sign are intrinsically connected in the sense that the representation extracts the characteristics of the original and, hence, acquires its power and aura. Similarly, the devils that are eliminated from possessed people's bodies are not effigies standing for an abstract concept, but become live entities whose presence makes their whole trajectory within the human bodily boundaries believable. In other words, it is precisely within this framework of theatre, as an aesthetic territory composed of presence, materiality, and reality over invisibility, abstraction, and illusion, that demonic possession is re-enacted. Theatre scholars such as Jody Enders have pointed out that "religion never really needs what theatre needs: verisimilitude."³⁴ In the case

of mystery plays, this verisimilitude emerges out of the bodily embodiment of theological knowledge into the language of concretization.

Narrating Possession

It is within this regime of demonic materiality mimetically created by the plays that the possessed speaks. The latter converses with the demons and the content of what she says derives from theological considerations about the mechanics of possession and the parts of the body that demons attack. The *Fille desmoniacle* in Gréban's *Mystère de la Passion* confesses that devils have invaded her brain: "Plus de cent deables sont flouris // au sanglant fons de ma cervelle" (More than one hundred devils are blooming at the bloody bottom of my brain [vv. 12231–12232]). In Jean Michel's *Passion*, the same character states that the devil is in her throat, hence, the bitterness that she feels in that part of herself: "J'en ay la gorge toute amere" (My throat is all bitter from it [v. 8170]). Fleurie, in the *Mystère de saint Remi*, feels the diabolical presence in various parts of her body such as the top of her head ("il est sur ma teste" [v. 6574]) and in her entrails: "j'ay ung asne cornu ou ventre, // Le diable y soit quant il entre" (I have a horned donkey inside my belly, The devil be there when he comes [vv. 5035–5036]). Demons, although invisible, can nevertheless be felt by the possessed. In the *Mystère de saint Remi*, Fleurie expressly describes seeing the demon: "Veez le ci, je y vois, il m'emporte" (Look at him here, I see him there, he transports me [v. 5105]). The devil also acts at a somatic level affecting humans' physical and locomotive capacities. The same Fleurie proclaims her incapacity to move, saying, "Hahay! Que j'ay esté en cage!" ("Hahay! I was in a cage!" [v. 5010]), explaining that the devil is the agent that provokes this state of affairs: "Le deable me tient par la gorge" (The devil grabs me by the throat [v. 5015]). The *fille desmoniacle* of Michel's *Passion* speaks entirely similar words: "Le dyable me tient a la gorge" (The devil holds me by the throat [v. 8235]). Moreover, the possessed in mystery plays witness witchcraft scenes, as Heinrich Kramer would have suspected.³⁵ Jean Michel's *fille desmoniacle* declares that she sees devils and witches interacting together:

Je voy tous les dyables en l'air,
Plus espés que troupeau de mouches,
Qui vont faire leurs escarmouches
Avecques ung tas de sorcieres [vv. 8043–8046]

[I see all the devils in the air, Thicker than a herd of flies, They [the devils] go to do their squabbles with a bunch of witches].

In the *Mystère de saint Remi*, Floquart plainly states that “Ainsi je chevauche le ramon” (So I ride a broomstick [v. 1789]), which is another way of saying that he took part in sorcery.³⁶

The content of the demoniac’s speech intersects with theological considerations about possession. Demons can enter the humans through open orifices such as the ear and can reside only in the body mass. Hence the language of the possessed has a citational character consisting of dialogical overtones: the demons are in these characters’ bodies exactly where theologians prescribed them to be. At the same time, the consequences of this heteroglossic endeavor lead to the production of an “excess-speech” on the part of the possessed. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will analyze the vocal overtones of this “other” speech through which we have direct access to a deeper dimension of the identity of the possessed.

Verbal Outbursts

In the *Life of Christina the Astonishing*, Thomas of Cantimpré (d. 1272) notes that during her trances the divinely possessed woman produces a song characterized by a “wondrous harmony that no mortal man could understand, nor could it be imitated by any artificial instrument.”³⁷ If Christina’s voice produces an uncanny speech subsumed by the regime of sheer harmony, the possessed characters of mystery plays act in opposition to such endeavors. In the *Mystère de saint Remi*, Fleurie’s father refers to his daughter’s singing as a “piteuse estampie” (a pitiful ruckus [v. 5438]). He points out that his daughter is no longer able to sing songs that once had angelic attributes and now, under the demonic influence, are the equivalent of the devil’s signature: “le chant que tant souloie amer, // Qui tant me sambloit angelique // Et or m’est diabolicque” (the song which I used to love, which seemed to me so angelic, seems to me now demonic [vv. 5440–5442]). This production of unarticulated speech becomes a means of undoing the human subject, of taking her outside the sphere of the “civilizing process,” to quote Norbert Elias.³⁸ Along these lines, in Jean Michel’s version of the *Mystère de la Passion*, the mother of the Fille de la Chananeé underlines this very pre-cultural dimension of possession:

Ma fille que j’ay veu tant gente,
tant courtoyse, tant bien apprise
et maintenant elle est surprise
de la demonyaclerie. (v. 8187–8190)

[My daughter whom I saw be so nice, so well-mannered, so well-behaved, and now she is seized by demonic possession].

Language is the very first stage in which the emergence of the possessed into a pre-cultural state is visible. Learned linguistic patterns are replaced by a dialect that fragments and mimics linguistic norms. This half language can be interpreted as having an aphasic character in which the possessed utter a type a speech that uses individually recognizable linguistic units, but these units fail to belong to a combinatory mechanism that can be decoded.³⁹ For instance, Gréban's *Fille* starts her discourse with an assertion that lacks a concrete referent or a context through which it can be interpreted, shouting: "Haro! Les pastes sont en l'aistre... // Gardez le chat pour les souris..." (Help! The pies are in the oven... Keep the cat for the mice [vv. 12229–12230]). This refusal to provide a clear-cut referent voids the discourse of the possessed of "meaning" in the logocentric sense. Instead, those who witness the behavior of the possessed, such as the members of their entourage, understand the voice of the possessed only as empty verbal occurrence, as "estampie" (ruckus), as verbal outbursts. As Alfons, Floquart's cousin in the *Mystère de saint Remi*, puts it, the possessed articulates nothing except a series of cries: "Il brait, il hue et il se tempeste" (He brays, he howls, he storms [v. 1750]).

A close look at their formal aspect shows that the "noise" these possessed characters produce contains several recurring linguistic patterns, such as interjections, or repetitions of same word or cluster of words. "Haro," with the version "hara," is one of these markers that acquires several valances and help the possessed express her condition overtly. For instance, Fleurie uses the interjection, "haro," to communicate the painful sensations she experiences because the devil is present within her body. "Laissez moy coucher, haro! // Le cuer me part, le col me quasse!" (Leave me lay down, haro! My heart splits, my neck breaks [vv. 6326–6327]). Additionally, the possessed makes use of linguistic patterns that consist of repetition of a word that, in isolation, have a clear meaning. Through repetition, however, the word losses its initial signified and heralds desubjectivation. Fleurie conveys her feelings of acute fear in connection to the presence of the demon through this very type of semantic repetition. "Regardez, il est sur ma teste. // Fuiiez, trestous fuiiez, fuiiez, // La, la, la, la, huiiez, huiiez" (Look, he is on my head. Go away, all of you go away, go away, There, there, there, there, yell, yell [vv. 6574–6576]). I would suggest that this seemingly pre-cultural language of the possessed consisting of interjections, repetitions, deictics—"la," "ci"—produces at least three effects that situate the possessed within a regime of interpretability. These sounds therefore signal how the possessed enunciates her painful encounter with demons at a sensory level.

Indeed, the possessed uses these markers to flesh out the emergence of demons and to show the extreme degree of visibility and immediacy that the latter produce. For instance, Floquart in the *Mystère de saint Remi* employs a series of repetitions to convey the sensorial perception of demons: “Je sens le deable atout ses cornes, // Il vient, il vient, il vient, il vient!” (I feel the devil with all its horns, He comes, he comes, he comes, he comes! [vv. 2157–2158]). In the same play Fleurie uses deictics to acknowledge the imminent bodily proximity of the devil: “Hola, vé le ci” (Hey, here he is [v. 5430]). The *Fille desmoniacle* in Jean Michel’s *Passion*, uses the interjection “haro!” to invoke demons directly and, additionally, to name the parts of her body where she feels their presence: “Le dyable me tient par le cou. // Haro, Satan et Lucifer, // haro, tous les dyables d’enfer” (The devil grabs me by the neck // Haro, Satan and Lucifer, // haro, all the devils of hell [vv. 8069–8071]). For the possessed, demons come into being for a reason other than because theologians envisioned their existence. In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty notes that objects do not have autonomy as such; they exist in the world only so long as they overcome themselves and trigger in the human subject certain thoughts or particular wills.⁴⁰ Similarly, demons are precisely this sort of object contingent upon human perception. They are ontologically possible provided that humans like Fleurie or *La Fille desmoniacle* can feel them somatically, at the level of their senses.

Once demons short-circuit the human body they produce intense physical and emotional traces. And here we notice the second effect produced by the non-logo-centric language the possessed employ. Vocal markers such as “Haro!” or repetitions of adverbs such as “tot” that make the language of the possessed “unintelligible” can be understood as a barometer to express physical pain and emotional distress. From Elaine Scarry’s seminal study, *The Body in Pain*, we know that pain belongs to the realm of language’s destruction, of the un-representable: “eventually the pain so deepens that the coherence of complaint is displaced by the sounds anterior to learned language.”⁴¹ In case of the possessed, pre-linguistic vocal outbursts map out the mechanics of the pain the possessed person experiences during her vexation by demons. Indeed, interjections and repetitions allow these possessed characters to localize pain in various portions of their body—the head, the throat, the mouth, the heart. Fleurie uses the interjection “haro” to express how the devil’s presence within her digestive tract provokes so much pain that she cannot carry out basic physiological functions like eating and drinking: “Le deable y soit quant il entre // Je ne puis boire ne mengier. // Haro! Haro!” (The devil be there when he enters, I can neither drink or eat. Help! Help! [vv. 5036–5038]). Elsewhere in the play, she acknowledges that the devil has overtaken her body entirely. As expected, pre-linguistic markers

convey the sense of convulsive pain: “Haro, haro, las a la mort // Deable m’assault, deable me mort” (Help, help, I’m deathly tired // the devil assails me, the devil kills me [v. 6708–6709]).

Paradoxically, this exacerbated sensation of pain, which can be envisaged as an act of torture from the part of demons, does not block self-awareness. Elaine Scarry notes that during traumatic events such as torture, the human subject loses the grip of her consciousness and of her sensations: “a (sixth) element of physical pain is its obliterations of the contents of consciousness. Pain annihilates not only the objects of complex thought and emotion but also the objects of the most elemental acts of perception.”⁴² Yet these possessed stage characters are capable of narrativizing their traumatic experiences. Linguistic markers outline clearly this hypersensitivity towards pain. From the above-mentioned example, we notice that the markers preface a detailed understanding of the physical pain mapping both the agent of pain, that is the devil, and the symptoms that he leaves on the body of the possessed. In other words, in the act of demonic torture, the enunciating “I” of the possessed becomes a transmitter for the sensorial and disruptive motions that the devil’s activity triggers inside the body of the demoniac. We thus notice a doubling of the persona of the possessed into an “I” that suffers intensely from the pain of possession, and another reflexive “I” that, through enunciation, narrativizes and diagnoses that pain. The same Fleurie, during possession, captures how her body detaches from the speaking “I” and transforms itself into an object, that is, a whistle, that the demon will eventually destroy:

Le grant deable me voeult mengier,
 Vez le ci, je y vois, il m’emporte
 Helas, hélas, cloés la porte!
 Il fait deux sifflez de ma gorge
 Estaingnez le feu de la forge,
 Le deable y soit, je seray arse,
 Passe, garçon, fui de ci, garsse!
 Le cuer me fault, vez me la morte! (vv. 5104–5111)

[The great devil wants to eat me, Look at him here, I see it there, he transports me. Alas, alas, nail the door shut! He makes two whistles from my throat Put out the fire in the forge, The devil be there, I will be burned, Go on, boy, flee from her, wench! My heart fails me, you see me, Death!]

The same “I” that narrates the physical effects produced by demons can equally convey the psychological distress resulting from a demon’s presence. In this sense,

a possessed character like Fleurie employs a plethora of words designating negative emotional states such as distress, sadness, anxiety, and pain: “Car destresse // Et tristesse // Sont en moy et telle angoisse” (Because distress and sadness are in me and such suffering [vv. 6312–6314]); or elsewhere, “Je voy douleur la plus piteuse” (I feel the most piteous pain [v. 6333]).

This amalgamation of quasi-conscious reflection and aggravated sensation has been defined by contemporary theorists such as Brian Massumi as the field of affect.⁴³ Affect is categorized as an impingement on the human body by something exterior—either an object or a particular state of affairs. Massumi points out that we cannot label this as emotion, which is a “qualified intensity, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits.”⁴⁴ Instead, affect is precisely a suspension of “action—reaction” circuits that escapes narration but, in exchange, produces something caught between passivity and activity, between body and mind, between action and reaction, between body depth and epidermis.⁴⁵ Even if affect is beyond narration it does not mean that it cannot be captured and analyzed. The territory where affect becomes perceivable is within one’s own constant, yet non-conscious capacity, for self-perception. Or, as Massumi puts it “it is the perception of this *self-perception*, its naming and making conscious, that allows affect to be effectively analyzed.”⁴⁶ Possessed characters like Fleurie exhibit precisely this self-perceptive dimension in which the experience of possession becomes a suspended and extremely intense moment that can enter a realm of both extreme sensitivity and agonistic pain in which the self is almost effaced. The non-linguistic contours of the language that the possessed uses (characterized by repetitions, interjections, words without referent) preface this *affective* state, in Massumi’s understanding. It is in this intensity of the now that the possessed *affectively*, that is, *self-perceptively*, convey what is happening within the depth of their bodies when they are assailed by demons. In the theatrical monologues that the possessed deliver, it is as if a hidden camera displays the interior of a possessed body and the possessed, while embodying the whole event, captures the climax and the whole array of sensations provoked by the demoniac presence.

Solipsistic Tones

Another facet of the non-logocentric yet signifying voice of the possessed consists in the production of scenarios in which the possessed subject engages with an absent audience. In Jean Michel’s *Mystère, La Fille desmoniacle* directly addresses

an imaginary “you” (“vous”): “Je vous diray bien autre chose” (I am going to tell *you* yet another thing [v. 8155; emphasis added]). Elsewhere in the text, the same imagined audience is called upon to witness rhetorical questions infused with allusions to scholastic philosophy: “Mais je demande ung quolibet // que tout le monde ne scet pas” (But I am asking a *quodlibet* that everyone does not know [vv. 8052–8053]). It is precisely this constant effort by the possessed to engage with a projected alterity that makes his or her discourse into unrecognizable speech for those around them. The speech of the possessed person contains a signifier, a signified, and an addressee—all elements that make a linguistic act possible. Yet all these structures of address are perceived by the others who surround the speaker as babbling, as non-sensical non-speech, and, consequently, as indecipherable. The reaction of Fleurie’s father to his daughter’s “babbling” is significant: “Belle fille, parlez a moy” (Sweet girl, talk to me [v. 5157]). Although vocal sounds are present, the possessed fails to enter a mode of discernable signification; he or she is an *in-fans*, one who cannot speak, as alluded to by Fleurie’s father. The possessed approaches a recognizable structure of address asymptotically, but his/her linguistic efforts are never understood as such. Indeed, the modes of address the possessed figure employs all fall outside the framework of an expected linguistic schema consisting of enunciations that elicit a type of answer. That is why the discourse of the possessed has the appearance of a suspended dialogue with an imaginary audience, and gives the impression of babbling, and of being a solipsistic intervention that alters the flux of “normal” conversation.

Mladen Dolar points out that babbling is, indeed, a type of communication encompassing a pre-symbolic, linguistically in-articulated use of the voice; this unconventional linguistic mode, however, calls for attention.⁴⁷ According to Dolar, the figure that embodies this linguistic mechanism best is the baby. Thus, through its voice, the baby wants to lure the interlocutor into its web of desires.⁴⁸ Similarly, the possessed, also, aims to capture an absent interlocutor within her inner universe dominated by fear, pain, and suffering. Indeed, a closer look at the modes of address that the possessed employs shows that her “babbling” has a strong communicative impetus. By invoking the addressee, “vous” or “tu,” the possessed wants to incorporate this “you” into her inner life. Additionally, the possessed manifests the desire to act upon the volition of this “you” that constitutes his or her audience. Hence the constant use of the imperative mood that the possessed employs. For instance, Fleurie invites her imaginary audience to take part in a dance “Venez dancer, venez” (Come dance, come [v. 5150]). Sometimes the possessed employs the imperative register to signal the presence of the devil and ask for help from the same absent and abstract interlocutor. Such is the case

with Floquart in the *Mystère de saint Remi* where, the character, suffering from the demonic invasion within his body, implores a non-existent *vous* to kill the demon: “Diable me tient, diable m’ara. // Tuez, tuez!” (The devil has me, the devil will have me. Kill, kill! [vv. 2165–2166]). Sometimes the implied “you” (“vous” or “tu”) has a more specific referent, that is, the devil. Indeed, a possessed character like Fleurie, interacts directly with the devil, responding with signs of disgust: “Taisiez vous, faulse villenaille” (Be silent, you two-faced bunch of scoundrels [v. 5564]). Elsewhere, Floquart feels the devil’s presence but is unable to localize it. His interrogation is followed by a direct address using the pronoun you (tu), as a direct sign of recognition: “Qui est la? Qui c’est? Ha, tu sornes!” (Who is there? Who is it? Hah! You are making fun! [v. 2156]).

Once the possessed has addressed his/her projected audience, they commence mapping out narratives that encompass disconnected events, notions, and persons with no real referents. Such narratives are devoid of a clear sense of temporality and allude to snapshots of lived reality. This aspect is probably most evident in those scenes where possession and witchcraft are closely connected to each other. Earlier in this book, I alluded to how witchcraft treatises such as *Malleus maleficarum* [The Hammer of Witches] linked possession and witchcraft, and explained how the demon’s physical presence inside humans alters the faculties. The *Fille chananee* (the *Fille desmoniacle*) of Gréban’s *Passion* declares that during her possession by the devil Fergalus, she could see distinctly how the *Vaudois* (a common 15th-century denomination for witches),⁴⁹ lured her into their activities: “J’os bien les Vaudois qui me huchent // pour chevaucher ung vieil ballet...” (I clearly hear the Vaudois who are calling me to ride an old broomstick [vv. 12243–12244]).

The declarations of the possessed people of witnessing, passively or actively, witchcraft scenarios are an integral part of a series of speeches consisting of proverbs intermingled with sentences that seem to be disconnected from the play’s narrative text, but whose referents are in quotidian existence. For instance, in Gréban’s text, before pointing out her possible links to the world of witchcraft, the possessed launches into an enumeration of potential scenarios, some of which belong to daily life events, activities, scenes:

Ha! larron, garde la cordelle,
Ta gorge sent tout le happart...
Ce sont florins: a part, a part:
J’ay veu musser le pot en terre... [vv. 12233–12236]

[Hey! Scoundrel, keep the rope, your neck fits the hook... The coins: hide them, hide them: I saw the pot buried in the ground].

La Fille in Jean Michel's *Passion* displays a similar tendency during her possession to register the flow of everyday events drawn from a social context. She mentions a case of justice consisting of criminals whose bodies are hanging in the air:

Je voy tous les dyables en l'air; [v. 8043]

[...] et ont pleines leurs gybecieres
de gros tysons et de charbons
pour faire rostir les jambons
a ung tas de larrons pendus [vv. 8047–8050]

[I see all the devils in the air [...] and they have their hunting satchels, filled up with embers and coals, to cook the legs of a bunch of hanged thieves].

Scenes such the one evoked here must have been quite common for the type of punishments inflicted by the trial courts at the end of the 15th century in France.⁵⁰ In them we notice that the possessed produces a counter-discourse consisting of a patchwork of scenes and languages, apparently disconnected, that go back to a common referent, namely ordinary practices. If we adopt the argument developed in *Malleus maleficarum*, the lack of rationality that characterizes the speech of the possessed is the direct result of devils and witches' intervention. In other words, through witchcraft techniques, everyday reality is perturbed and the possessed cannot make a clear distinction between things that happen as such and those that take place only in imagination. Nevertheless, the possessed figure's apparently nonsensical, linguistic delirium refers to a routinized series of actions, relations, and contingencies that give structure to the quotidian. Thus, during the process of possession, the structures of quotidian existence are surreptitiously broken and, at the same time, re-conveyed by the possessed into snapshots of reality and fragmented visions such as the hanged thieves, the pot with the coins, etc. These sorts of impressions, sensations, and daydreams have been labeled "ordinary affects" by anthropologists such as Kathleen Stewart.⁵¹ For Stewart, ordinary affects are the equivalent of an erratic circuit that flows and animates the body. Despite their lack of material contours, they acquire texture once they move through bodies and the daily life and social experiences surrounding a particular subject. Through the prism of the notion of ordinary affects, the seemingly solipsistic voice of the possessed displays a form of coherence that surely refuses any criteria of "logocentric" rationality to be analyzed. Such discourse develops its own internal logic drawing from scenes of ordinary experiences and events whose structure is layered down in an erratic

enumeration and description. The demonic presence is precisely this circuit that coagulates the interior life of the possessed consisting of various emotional trajectories, fragments of thought, and snapshots of visions. This way possession enters the regime of the banal, of the ordinary. Demons cease being impalpable, foreign creatures that intermingle and affect the human flux of thought formation negatively. Instead, they galvanize and bring to the surface certain residual images and feelings buried within the unconscious of the possessed.

I began this chapter by pointing out that the voice of the possessed has traditionally been circumscribed within the realm of a discourse that refuses interpretation. Thus the content of the speech that these subjects produce, including the possessed, is qualified from the very beginning as an ontological impossibility. In this logic, the possessed does not have the propriety of his or her identity. Consequently, his or her speech is a linguistic monstrosity; it can be heard but not understood. In the Western imaginary, this effacement of voice rendered the late-medieval figure of the possessed a marginal and, in the *longue durée*, a pathological, subject.⁵² In this chapter, I have attempted to think of a more ethical and inclusive way of interpreting what possessed characters utter. In doing so, I reconsider the notion of voice in opposition to that of speech. The former is not subordinated to the latter. Instead of being a simple vocal accessory through which what is said becomes articulated, I have considered the saying, the “vocality” of the voice, to quote Paul Zumthor again, as producing a meaningful excess. Indeed, the non-logocentric trajectory that the discourse of the possessed follows consists of series of interjections, words without referent, consistent repetition and deictics, and complex solipsistic scenarios. All these non-conventional linguistic items and structures allow us to conceptualize the figure of the possessed in its ontological and phenomenological complexities. Mystery plays are representational sites that encompass and render normative a hegemonic discourse of demonic possession that circulated within theological circles at the end of the Middle Ages. They offer conceptual models through which we can understand how the possessed subject was produced and understood by a broader public. At the same time, mystery plays allow room for the insertion of the persona of the possessed within other modes of production that do not follow articulated linguistic conventions. Through “voice,” understood as a pre-linguistic and the “vocalic” use of language, we have access to a de-pathologized image of the possessed, one drawn from unconscious images based on everyday reality, modes of expressing sensation of pain, desires, anxieties, and fear. The next chapter stays in the realm of possession as lived experience; yet it shifts from the possessed and her idiom

to the way in which the others witness and become psycho-somatically immersed into the demoniac's universe.

Notes

1. Jean Molinet, "La tresdure et doloireuse oppression que firent aulcuns mauvais espritz aux religieuses du Quesnoy le Conte," in *Corpus documentorum inquisitionis haereticarum pravitatis Neerlandicae*, ed. Paul Frédéricq (Ghent, 1889–1906), 485: "Et alors la povre malhereuse fut plus ardente et enflamee que devant, et lennemy connoissant quelle estoit acheviee des espincheaulx de Venus, se transmua et print forme du dict pater, sy que finalement plusieurs fois la cognut charnellement, puit luy dit quil estoit le dyable et ycelle (...) l'appelloit *Mon amoureux*." [and then the poor woman was even more desirous and enflamed than before, and the enemy knowing that she was under the erotic influence of Venus, transformed and took the shape of that priest, so that in the end he had sex with her several times, then he told her that he was the devil and the woman (...) called him *My lover*].
2. Molinet, "La tresdure et doloireuse oppression," 484: "ils commencerent a examiner" they [started to examine].
3. Molinet, "La tresdure et doloireuse oppression," 483.
4. Saint Augustine, *On Genesis*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill, vol. I/13 of *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1990).
5. Michel de Certeau, *L'Écriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 284–315.
6. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 2.
7. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 15.
8. Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottan (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 9; Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
9. Paul Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*, trans. Kathryn Murphy-Judy (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 44.
10. Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*, 13.
11. Barbara Newman, "What Did It Mean to Say 'I Saw'? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture," *Speculum* 80 (2005): 1–43; Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "The Strange Case of Ermine de Reims (c. 1347–1396): A Medieval Woman between Demons and Saints," *Speculum* 85 (2010): 321–56; Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2004); Moshe Sluhovskiy, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
12. *Mystère de saint Remi*, ed. Jelle Koopmans (Geneva: Droz, 1997).

13. Andrieu de la Vigne, *Mystère de saint Martin*, ed. André Duplat (Geneva: Droz, 1979).
14. *Mistère de l'institution de l'Ordre des Freres Prescheurs*, eds. Simone de Reyff, Guy Bedouelle, and Marie-Claire Gérard-Zai (Geneva: Droz, 1997).
15. Pierre-André Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale (XIe-XIIe siècle)* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1985).
16. Jenni Kuuliala, *Childhood Disability and Social Integration in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).
17. Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Raise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981); Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle*; Kuuliala, *Childhood Disability*.
18. For a detailed analysis of the mechanics and specificity of the scenes of exorcism in the mystery plays see Chapter 4.
19. Brown, *The Cult of Saints*.
20. Brown, *The Cult of Saints*, 112.
21. "Haro, dyables vilz et hydeux, // espris dampnés, maulditz et hors, // n'entrés desormais plus es corps// des humains pour les posseder, // car malgré moy, me fault vuyder// et ester mis hors de mon ester// par Jesus qui est nostre maistre" (vv. 8369–8375) [Haro, vile and hideous devils, doomed, cursed spirits, stop entering the humans' body to possess them, as despite my will, I have to exit, and be put upright by Jesus who is our master].
22. "Belzebus qui est des nostres, //Quant bouté estoit un ung corps, // Ne povoient oncques bouter hors, //Mais Jhesuscris par sa puissance//Li donne congié et licence// De nous chatier villainement" (vv. 2119–2125) [Belzebus who belongs to our kin, When he was inside a body, They (the apostles) cannot take it out, But Jesus Christ through his power, Gives them (to the apostles) permission, To chase us out vilely].
23. *Mistère de l'institution de l'Ordre des Freres Prescheurs*.
24. Gréban, *Mystère de la Passion*: "il m'en a fallu desloger" (v. 12346) [I needed to leave the shelter].
25. Mercadé, *Mystère de la Passion*, 92.
26. Jean Michel, *Mystère de la Passion*, 112.
27. *Le Livre de Conduite du Régisseur et le Comptes des Dépenses pour le Mystère de la Passion*, ed. Gustave Cohen (Strasbourg and Paris: Istra, 1925), 184.
28. Henry d'Outreman, *Histoire de la ville et comté de Valenciennes* (Douai, 1639) quoted in Jody Enders, *Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2002).
29. Translated in Enders, *Death by Drama*, 157.
30. *Mystère de saint Martin*, 461.
31. For further details about the way in which medieval theater stages the corporeality of invisible beings such as demons and their interaction with witches see Andreea Marculescu, "Playing with Witches: Theology, History, and Performance in Jean Michel's

- Mystère de la Passion*,” in *The Devil in Society in Pre-Modern Europe*, eds. Richard Raiswell and Peter Dendle (Toronto, ON: Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2012), 27–47.
32. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).
 33. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 47–48.
 34. Jody Enders, “Performing Miracles: The Mysterious Mimesis of Valenciennes (1547),” in *Theatricality*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postleweit (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 52: “Theology demands the *absence* of precisely what makes for the *presence* of theater. Religious faith is based on what people *cannot* see: unless they happen to witness a miracle. The medieval theater is based on what they *can* see. Whence the anomalies of the performance of religious drama: it deploys verisimilitude where verisimilitude has no place.”
 35. For the connection between mystery plays and witchcraft see Marculescu, “Playing with Witches,” 27–47.
 36. See Koopmans’ note in the edition of the *Mystère de saint Remi*, 165. “Chevaucher le ramon” means riding to the Witches’ Sabbath on a broomstick.
 37. Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints’ Lives (Abbot John of Cantimpré, Christina the Astonishing, Margret of Ypres, and Lutgard of Aywières)*, ed. Barbara Newman, trans. Margot, H. King and Barbara Newman (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 145.
 38. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).
 39. For the mechanics of aphasia see Roman Jakobson, *Studies in Child Language and Aphasia* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971).
 40. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
 41. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 54.
 42. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 54.
 43. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002).
 44. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 28.
 45. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 32–33.
 46. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 36.
 47. Dolar, *A Voice*, 27–29.
 48. Dolar, *A Voice*, 28.
 49. Richard Kieckheffer, “Mythologies of Witchcraft in the Fifteenth Century,” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 1 (2006): 79–108.
 50. Claude Gauvard, *De Grace especial: Crime, état et société en France à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991).

51. Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007).
52. To grasp this *longue durée* it is sufficient to think of the medicalization of possession in the work of the 19th-century Jean-Martin Charcot, who associated demonic possession with hysteria.

Sensorial Encounters with the Possessed

In his hagiography of Ludgard of Aywières (d. 1246), Thomas of Cantimpré (d. 1272) mentions the case of a nun who becomes possessed.¹ The nun's condition drew Ludgard's attention who, together with another religious official, Brother Simon, prayed for the nun. While praying, both Ludgard and Brother Simon became frightened by the symptoms of demonic possession that the nun displayed:

...the nun's hands and limbs contracted with an overpowering rigidity, and her mouth was closed so firmly that it could not be opened at all, not even with a knife. Seeing this, they [Ludgard and Brother Simon] were shaken by an appalling fear and, bending their knees in prayer, they entreated the Lord for mercy for such a great torment.²

The somatic bodily changes that a possessed person typically suffers such as the stiffness of the limbs trouble ordinary people and provoke fear, anxiety, and, ultimately sheer disgust. The same attitude persists several centuries later when a theologian such as Johannes Nider underlines the horror experienced by those who look at the possessed: "those possessed by or familiar with demons develop deformities in their eyes, face, and gestures [which are] horrible for other men to look at."³ The act of looking at the face of the possessed has

therefore a Medusa-like effect upon the viewer who finds himself or herself in a peculiar state of horror, a mix of repugnance and fear. Moreover, demons' attacks on humans produce a disembodied corporeal shell which lost its integrity as a whole and in which each element has its own singularity and anatomy: the limbs and hands are rigid, the mouth is stiff, and the eyes and the face have abnormal shapes. But, in addition to horror, both Ludgard and Brother Simon activate mechanisms of care and responsibility for the same body by placing it within an economy of compassion: "[they] entreated the Lord for mercy for such a great torment."⁴

The experience of Ludgard and Brother Simon shows that, on the one hand, the possessed subject is exposed to demonic violence that provokes not only pain but also bodily deformation beyond recognition. On the other hand, the possessed becomes a social repository for both collective anxieties and feelings of pity. While the previous chapter focused on the economy of suffering that the possessed exposes via her idiom based on vocality as a functioning principle, the present one explores the figure of the possessed from the perspective of bodily vulnerability. Analyzing the possessed in terms of *vulnus*, of a body exhibited in its absolute destruction and requiring care, induces an ethical perspective in understanding the social, intellectual, and emotional role that the possessed played in pre-modern society. The impact that the presence of the possessed exerted upon the medieval collective imaginary is not something new. Scholars⁵ have already referred to the pre-modern possessed subject as a central link in a multilayered theological debate regarding complex issues such as the discernment of spirits and the nature of female spirituality.⁶ More recently, historians like Brian Levack⁷ have pointed out that the identity of the demoniac needs to be understood as part of a larger social scenario in which every subject involved in the act of possession, that is, the demoniac, their entourage and their healers, plays a well-defined role: "all the participants in the drama of possession acted in the way that members of their religious communities expected them to act."⁸ Yet the encounter of able-bodied subjects with the disabled body of the possessed involves less controlled and anticipated modes of investment. Therefore, this chapter will investigate the nature of such collective and intersubjective modes of rerouting the suffering of the possessed into mechanisms of attention. More concretely, I will look at the ways in which the pain that afflicts the demoniac and transforms her into a vulnerable body shapes intersubjective relationships and simultaneously remodels individual subjectivity through the circuit of particular affective encounters.

Monstrous Encounters

The first reaction of horror that Brother Simon and Ludgard demonstrate towards the possessed nun is also common, to a certain extent, to mystery plays. Indeed, the demoniac is a presence that breaks both social and the aesthetic boundaries. Her appearance puzzles those regarding her and transports them into the sphere of the uncanny. This is the case in *Mystère de saint Martin* by André de la Vigne,⁹ where one of the characters who witnesses the spectacle of possession declares his mixed feelings of both astonishment and fear: “Je m’esbahis comme // Il peut porter le mal” (I am amazed and scared of how he is suffering from possession) [vv. 7522–7523]). In *Mystère de l’Institution de l’Ordre des Freres Prescheurs*, the profile of demoniac is configured within pathological parameters. He is qualified as a “parvers” (displaying signs of disease [v. 3595]) and a troubled subject (“Il est si plain de desarroy” (He is so full of trouble) [v. 3605]). Through his words and behavior, he unsettles the community and suspends order and articulated speech: “Il nous maudit, il nous tempeste // Et nous maine telle tempeste // Qu’on ne sçauroit penser ne dire” (He curses us, he is enraged against us // And provokes so much trouble to us // That we wouldn’t know what to think or say [vv. 3598–3600]). In Gréban’s *Mystère de la Passion*, Herode, one of the “bad” demoniacs who are never healed through exorcism and, thus, restored back to Christian society, provokes sentiments of sheer physical disgust. Indeed, in this case the body of the demoniac exhibits a distinct stench which provokes a clear sense of bodily destruction and imminent death: “N’approchez point si pres de luy, // dame, pour le mal sentement: // il put le plus horriblement, // qu’il n’est huy riens plus corruptif” (Don’t come near so close of him, my lady, because of his stench: he smells so bad that nowadays there isn’t anything more destructive [vv. 7946–7949]). In *Mystère de saint Remi*, Placidus, one of the characters that witnesses Floquart’s episode of possession, labels the proximity to Floquart as extremely dangerous: “sa compagnie est perilleuse” (his presence is dangerous [v. 1866]). Floquart’s father himself is startled by the unnatural shape of his son’s body: “De ceste lasse creature, // Mon filz. (...) Car il n’a teste, piez ne poings (...) Sours, aveugle, demoniacle” (Of this wretched creature, my son. As he is not endowed with reason, legs and arms (...) death, blind, and possessed [vv. 1744–1745; vv. 1747–1749]). As for the other possessed in the play like the young girl Fleurie, her community also finds her condition dangerous for everyone’s bodily safety and integrity. In this sense, her father’s cousin warns everyone to move away from her side: “Hé Dieu, fuyez vous de sa voie! Elle n’est mie en son bon sens!” (Oh God, go away from her side! She is not in her right state of mind! [vv. 5410–5411]).

From these instances, we see that what instills anxiety and fear is the inability of the possessed to demonstrate self-government. Essentially, possessed characters such as Floquart, Fleurie, or Herod challenge the normative autonomous, sovereign, and self-contained western subject that operates a strict demarcation between the self and others. As Margrit Shildrick, a feminist philosopher and disability studies scholar, has observed:

...to be a self—and more significantly a subject—with effective agency is, in every sense of the word, to be capable of exercising autonomy. Because the western logos privileges the freedom and the rationality of the putatively disembodied mind as the irreducible marker of the sovereign subject, it follows that the body itself is relatively unimportant, so long as it follows normative parameters that pose no hindrance to the implementation of self-determination.¹⁰

The demoniac reconfigures this sovereign bodily economy by foregrounding the “disembodied mind” at the center of her performance. In other words, the possessed offers a blatant counter-example of what Rosemarie Garland-Thompson calls “the western fantasy of absolute able-bodiedness.”¹¹ Indeed, through her anomalous embodiment that violates corporeal norms, inability of producing articulated language, and untamed gestures the demoniac represents a compromised articulation of what makes a subject able-bodied: self-government, determination, and control. That is why the close proximity to possessed characters produces a sensation of a breach between self and other. The possessed enters the sphere of the able-bodied individual and instills the sense that one’s self-containment is in danger and her imaginary bodily boundaries are at risk of being assaulted by the demoniac other.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the demoniac is herself the result of bodily contamination produced through the ingestion of a foreign object, that is, the devil who is, eventually, vomited, defecated, or coughed out. But while inside her body, such demonic conglomerates threaten the integrity of her own self. Such double pollution from the inside to the outside and the other way round opens the domain of what Julia Kristeva calls the abject: “The body’s inside shows up in order to compensate for the collapse of the border between the inside and outside. It is as if skin, a fragile container, no longer guaranteed the integrity of one’s ‘own and clean self’.”¹² Similarly, the demoniac represents this type of border that stirs a sense of insecurity in the “clean” self: the possessed resembles “us” but not quite given his or her distorted anatomy, speech, and gestures. Yet her presence is closed to “us”; the margins of “our” bodies represents a defilement of “our” identity, a collapse of “our”

bodily boundaries. Hence the reactions of disgust in case of Herod and of open rejection for Fleurie who has no “sense” or “sentement” [feeling].

Psychological anxiety of contamination from the gestures and speech of the possessed also translates into concrete fear in the community. In this respect, the warning that Fleurie’s guardians give about not approaching her echoes the concerns that medieval juridical and medical discourses formulated about the potential threat that the demoniac represented for herself and those around her. Arnold of Villanova, one of the central medieval figures to conflate *mania* and *frenesia* with *alienatio daemonica* (demonic possession),¹³ prescribes cuffing, whipping, and isolation for those suffering of such afflictions. As Jean-Marie Fritz points out,¹⁴ Arnold of Villanova’s treatment is both of therapeutic and pathological nature. According to Arnold, the victims of both *mania* and demonic possession need to be shown terrible images, to be whipped, and verbally abused to make them cry.¹⁵ Additionally, within the same logic of both healing and pathology, medieval doctors, including Arnold himself, prescribed the solitary confinement and physical immobilization of the mentally sick: “to keep their arms tied and the legs cuffed when they risk in their agitation to hurt themselves or to keep them in a dark place or dungeon to avoid that they hurt others through their hits or themselves.”¹⁶ Isolating and cuffing those subjects suffering from different forms of mental disturbances, including demonic possession, is predominant in juridical thought as well. Indeed, medieval collections of laws and letters of remission prescribe, as an exceptional measure, the imprisonment and, of more common practice, immobilization of the bodies of the mentally challenged.¹⁷ Medieval juridical sources are also unanimous in stating that the insane person’s confinement is not a political responsibility but rather a personal one: it is not the “state” or other forms of governmental organizations, but the guardian¹⁸ or the neighborhood (*voesinê*)¹⁹ that need to make sure that the mentally sick is imprisoned or mobilized so that she does not provoke violence. Such an attitude reconfirms Michel Foucault’s main argument developed in *Madness and Civilization*: the pathologization and the segregation of the mentally ill in state institutions like asylums and clinics happen only in the later centuries.²⁰ Yet, the medieval confinement, even when not institutionalized as such, is the result of the production of collective anxieties towards the potentially violent character of the mentally sick. The disturbance, the disgust, and, ultimately, the fear of able-bodied subjects when confronted with those afflicted by different forms of mental affections, including demonic possession, translates into visible ways of keeping away from them through verbal and physical violence and confinement.

Mystery plays are no exception in this sense either. In Arnoul Gréban's *Mystère de la Passion*, the stage directions in the play portray *La Fille de la Chanane* with her hands in shackles accompanied by her guardian, Ysore, "*garde de la fille*."²¹ In Jean Michel, it is *la Chamberiere* who attends the demoniac whereas in *Mystère de saint Martin* a royal character, Prince Tetradius, is the guardian and master of the *Desmonyacle*.²² The two possessed characters in *Mystère de saint Remi*, Floquart and Fleurie, have as guardians their parents who are assisted by other family members and close servants. In *Mystère de l'Institution*, the demoniac, *Le Convers*, is under the guardianship of the whole monastic community. The demoniacs in the plays are always under their guardians' close supervision and attention. Moreover, just as medieval doctors and jurists prescribed, the possessed are immobilized once their behavior becomes threatening for themselves and their entourage. André de la Vigne's play contains clear stage directions about the fact that the demoniac, while shouting, is cuffed by both his feet and arms: "puis doit crier ung homme desmonyacle enfermé par les piedz et [par les] mains" [then has to cry a demoniac who is chained by his feet and arms].²³ Other plays are not that specific in terms of stage directions, but the bodies of the text offers plenty of details regarding the menacing behavior of the possessed towards the others. In Jean Michel's play, *La Fille* receives verbal threats and physical corrections once she starts uttering words that disturb and vexes her guardian:

La Chamberiere

Ha, vous cesserés ceste game
ou il y aura beau debat.
Paix, paix, paix!

La Fille

Elle me bat.
Au murtre! Haro, Lucifer,
venés me trainer en enfer (vv. 8177–8182)
[...]

La Fille

Va, paillarde, le cul te sue;
[...]

La Chamberiere

Ha vrayment, vous serés batue
ou vous vous tairés cette fois. (vv. 8229–8232)

[Ha, you'll stop this nonsense otherwise there will be a quarrel. Peace, peace, peace! La Fille: She is hitting me! To death! Oi, Lucifer, come and drag me to

Hell [...] La fille: Go away, whore, your ass is sweaty; La Chambriere: Now, you'll really be beaten or you'll calm down].

If for *La Fille* menaces are only verbal, characters like Fleurie from *Mystère de saint Remi*, whose language and untamed gestures shock and disturb, and render her dangerous for the community, is immobilized and cuffed down:

Fleurie
Je vous estrangleray trestous!

Cousin
Cousin, et a quoy pensez vous?
Revengiez moy a tout les moins!

Pere
Galois, prenez la par les poings,
Monseigneur, couchiez la a terre!

Piettre
Vous dictes bien, mais qu'on la ferre
De ces fers ici par les piez! (vv. 6583–6589)

[Fleurie: I am going to strangle all of you! Cousin: Cousin, what are you thinking of? Defend me at least! Pere: Galois, grab her by her knuckles, Sir, lay her down! Piettre: You are right, but let's tie her with these chains around her feet!].

The absolute inability of the possessed to assert a strong sense of self-government requires a guardian to interpret her desires and needs and to tame her uncontrollable gestures. Chains (*les fers*) are, thus, the ultimate and most visible way of keeping away, if not effacing, the presence of such ontological hybrid like the demoniac. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, in his manifesto on monsters, pointed out that monsters “are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions.”²⁴ To a large extent, the demoniac carries out the same role like the monster acting as an ontologically suspended entity that threatens the borders of the sealed, sovereign, and autonomous selfhood of the abled subject. But, at the rest of this chapter will show, the same “incoherent” body which refuses any belonging to classificatory systems of normative bodily configurations becomes a barometer for affective attention and corporeal empathy from the same subjects who dismiss her as “anomalous.”

Corporeal Encounters

Under the influence of phenomenology, the notion of the autonomous selfhood has been challenged. Using the vocabulary and the heuristic tools provided by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, feminist scholars such as Elizabeth Grosz²⁵ and Rosalyn Diprose²⁶ have argued that the body, as both a sensory and rational assemblage, is an open entity through which one can relate to others. Or, as Diprose puts it, "it is because my body is given to others and vice versa that I exist as a social being."²⁷ What does it mean then to think about embodiment at a phenomenological level and, particularly, in connection to the identity of the possessed? From Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*,²⁸ we know that objects exist only as long as they enter the horizon of the seer. In other words, for Merleau-Ponty the act of perception is preobjective. To fulfill such acts of perception one needs attention which, according to Merleau-Ponty, is "neither an association of images, nor the return to itself of thought already in control of its objects, but the active constitution of a new object which makes explicit and articulate what was until then presented as no more than an indeterminate horizon."²⁹ Attention that brings the object into being combined with preobjective perception is the basis of a phenomenological type of embodiment or of the "lived body," as Merleau-Ponty argues.

The anthropologist Thomas Csordas³⁰ and others taking inspiration from the field of "sensuous scholarship" represented by anthropologists such as David Howes,³¹ Kathryn Linn Geurts,³² and Paul Stoller,³³ among others, have pointed out that such forms of the "lived body" has tremendous epistemological potential in the making of knowledge. Instead of considering the body as a passive container of various hegemonic discourses, as certain versions of post-Structuralism posited, embodiment as "lived body" is an active maker of knowledge. In this sense, it is with and through the body that we share a certain mode of somatic attention and a sensory engagement with others.³⁴ However, this type of bodily empathy is not divorced from a wide array of social practices. Thus, according to Csordas, a variety of cultural practices such as playing sports, dancing, making love and even meditation and mystic states require somatic modes of attention to other people's bodies.³⁵ In fact, according to him, "somatic modes of attention are culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that embodied the presence of others."³⁶

From the case of Brother Simon and Ludgard with which I started this chapter, we saw that they are also captured as engaging with the possessed by means of a similar type of somatic attention filtered through the activation of cultural

practices, that is, the prayer and the act of bending the knees. By performing such a gesture, they can relate in a corporeal way to the vulnerable body of the demoniac while, simultaneously, experiencing feelings of disgust for her disembodied self. Hence the heuristic framework of sensorial embodiment helps us reinterpret the identity of the possessed not solely as a sort of hybrid monstrous subject that menaces the bodily boundaries of the contained self. The notion of sensorial engagement to the vulnerable body of the possessed enables an analysis of how sovereign, able-bodied subjects can witness, relate, and be changed by an “anomalous” type of behavior such as that of the possessed nun from Thomas of Cantimpré’s account. However, whereas more authoritative and, implicitly, prescriptive accounts like Thomas’ hagiography are rather schematic in their depiction of the bodily interrelatedness towards the demoniac, mystery plays offer a much more complex cartography of this type of corporeal engagement with the possessed.

In the plays, those who are in the immediate proximity of the demoniac, particularly her next of kin, employ words designating personal distress, bereavement, grief, and despair. In *Mystère de saint Remi*, Floquart’s father is “ennuyé de ma vie” (unhappy with my life [v. 1737]) and “de destresse abbatu” (affected by distress [v. 1761]). In the same play, Fleurie’s mother, Prolice, experiences similar states when she looks at her demoniac daughter. She is deeply affected by despair and suffers from “douleur amere” (bitter pain [v. 4860]). Fleurie’s uncle, King Alari, displays his feelings of pain when confronting the situation his niece is in: “Les douleurs n’en puis retraire” (I cannot describe the pain [v. 6133]). In a similar state is Fleurie’s father, who mentions to the members of his community his state of distress and extreme worry when hearing Fleurie’s inarticulate discourse: “Galois, veci douleur amere: // Je suis le pere de destresse, // Avironné de telle angoisse” (Galois, here is terrible pain: I am the father of distress overcome by such pain [vv. 5714–5716]). In the Passion Plays, *La Chananeë* reveals the similar feelings of pain when she explains the case of her daughter: “regardés aussi la detresse // ou mon cueur s’estaint et oppresse // quand je pense a sa dyablerie” (also observe my distress that destroys and afflicts my heart when I think of her possession [vv. 8124–8126]).³⁷ In André de la Vigne’s *Mystère de saint Martin* those who witness the Desmonyacle’s performance develop mechanisms of recognizing his pain: “Tetradius: Monsieur, vella le douloureux; // Regardez la pitié terrible. // Premier: Jamais povre homme langoureux // Ne souffrit douleur si orrible” (Tetradius: Sir, here is the wretched; Look at this terrible pain// Premier: Never did such a poor sick person suffer such a horrible pain [vv. 7552–7555]). Pain, distress, grief, suffering are therefore common terms that those who witness the manifestations of demonic possession employ. Utilizing these terms helps

them conceptualize how the symptoms and reactions of the possessed affect them directly not only mentally but somatically as well.

Furthermore, the use of this vocabulary of pain reflects the first step of correlation between one's own sensations and those of the possessed. In this respect, they do not experience suffering as a distant process, materialized through a sort of distant implication, as Luc Boltanski explained the mechanisms of empathy as distance.³⁸ Contrary to that, we can detect a type of collective sensory and bodily response to the demoniac's various somatic changes—the result of “somatic attention,” to use Csordas, term, in the act of possession. In *Mystère de saint Remi*, the fathers of Floquart and of Fleurie, respectively, talk about the same transferential mobility that characterizes the state of the demoniacs who narrate their impossibility to master their own bodies that the devil short-circuits through violent blows. The demoniacs' state of frenzy during which they feel the constant demonic presence touching the interior and the exterior of their body is correlated with a similar inner trauma which provokes a bodily tremor for their parents. For Fleurie, the physical distress causes a never-ending emotional distress:

Cent fois le jour je tors mes poings.

Pour la tresgrant angoisse amere,

Pour la dreté, pour la misere
Qui par mon povre corps traverse. [vv. 6550–6553]

[One hundred times a day I twist my fists because of the excruciating bitter pain; because of the severity (of the pain), because of the misery that my poor body endures].

In Jean Michel's *Mystère de la Passion*, the Fille's guardian, La Chambreriere characterizes her protégée's physical and mental state as being in perpetual movement: “jamais n'a respos ne sejour, // sans cesser est en ce tourment” (she never has any rest, she is tormented without interruption [vv. 8219–8220]). A similar type of continuous inner torment manifested at a bodily level can be detected in the case of Fleurie's and Floquart's fathers who employ the same vocabulary like the possessed to describe their malaise: “(...) quand je regarde // mon enfant en subjection // D'amere tribulacion (...) Ne n'ay repos jour ne demi” (When I look at my child who is afflicted by serious torment (...) I can't rest a day [vv. 5088–5093]); “Je me martyre nuit et jour // Sans avoir repos ne sejour” (I torment myself day and night without taking any rest [vv. 1758–1759]).

In addition to this type of transferential mobility, based on unconscious kinesthesia, the witnesses to the act of possession also display a sensorial response to the array of physical and mental pains that the demoniac suffers. However, while the demoniac localizes her own pain produced by the demonic attack in various portions of the body—the head, the stomach, or the throat—in the case of those witnessing such manifestations of pain, they enter a more diffused circuit that captures the whole body. Similarly, Fleurie’s parents experience an overall sensation of bodily metamorphosis that echoes the same physiological changes that they notice in Fleurie herself. Indeed, Prolice, the mother, is an attentive observer of the anatomical changes that her daughter’s body experiences. The mother’s gaze reveals the existence of an almost visceral decaying body of her demoniac daughter in which parts such as the veins and nerves achieve autonomy and become visible on their own: “Sa couleur devient ynde et perse // Et force de douleur li perse // Veinnes et ners amerement” (Her complexion becomes purplish and blue³⁹ and the intensity of pain destroys her veins and nerves badly [vv. 4832–4838]). Elsewhere in the text, Fleurie herself acknowledges her bodily destruction as a result of the demonic presence: “Je pers mon sens et ma santé” (I am losing my mind and health [v. 5205]); “mes povres membres et mon corps // Sont de douleur a moictié mors” (my poor limbs and my body are half dead because of the pain (vv. 5187–5188)). The same sense of liquefying the self and the disintegration of body is visible in the case of her parents as well. Thus, Fleurie’s father experiences a parallel sense of bodily effacement after having seen his daughter suffering from demonic possession: “Je pers le sens et la couleur // Je pers mon corps, je pers mon ame” (I am losing my mind and breath // I am losing my body, I am losing my soul [vv. 5084–5085]). Fleurie’s mother also experiences a sense of bodily finitude and disintegration of the self that leads to the creation of an almost different persona that lacks two essential features, namely mental health and memory: “car je n’ay plus sens ne memoire” (I no longer have mental sanity or memory [v. 4932]). Floquart’s father internalizes the mechanics of pain and bodily changes that his son experiences:

Pour ta douleur le cuer me font,

Pour ta douleur ay couleur perse

Et ta couleur le cuer me perse

Quand je te voy le cuer me noie. (vv. 2167–2170)

[Because of your pain my heart melts, because of your pain my complexion is blue, and your face from which life is almost gone pierces my heart, when I see you my heart sinks].

Floquart's feeling of bodily destruction is transferred to the father who seems to convey the following affective logic of suffering: "suffering for my child" translates as "suffering with him" and in this process his pain becomes my pain and his bodily effacement applies to me as well. In other words, through the pain of the demoniac, the "I" has reflexive access at her own emotional territory and this is a shift allowing her to experiment with the limits of my own self.

From these examples, we notice that those witnessing the act of possession refer to their bodies as a series of lived experiences that engage with similar sensations experienced by the possessed both at a kinesthetic and sensorial level. However, as we have seen, this somatic correlation does not imply a mimetic act in which the parents or friends of the possessed perform their own act of possession. While the phenomenon of collective demonic possession is well-documented, especially in the monastic space of 17th century France,⁴⁰ the characters in mystery plays do not follow this route. They do not feel the devil and, hence, do not manifest symptoms of possession as such. But they are somatically submerged in the pain that demons wreak upon the bodies of the possessed.

This mode of engagement in which those witnessing the torment of the possessed echo similar sensations to those of the demoniac becomes perhaps even more evident when the possessed experiences an acute feeling of death. For instance, several times in the play, Fleurie voices her physical and mental inability to cope with the demonic presence within her body. Moreover, as this overall state of depression punctuated with feelings of anxiety, sadness, and grief becomes more acute and physically destroys her, Fleurie desires death as the only viable solution to end her suffering:

Helas, mon coeur la douleur sent

Qui me mudrie et me desvoie

Qui me banit de toute joie.
Je languis en amere angoisse,
Je vis et vivray en destresse;
Je pers mon sens et ma santé,
Mon povre corps est tourmenté
Ne nul ne me peult secourir
En ce point suis jusqu'au morir. (vv. 5200–5208)

[Helas, my heart feels the pain that kills and torments me, [the pain] that keeps me away from all joy. I suffer from bitter distress, I am and will be living in pain; I am losing my sanity and health; my poor body is tormented and no one can help me and I am in this state until my death].

In fact, “death” is one of the key word in the demoniac’s vocabulary. Desiring death allows the possessed to articulate both a sense of relief and a sense of a bodily limit that resists another demonic attack. Or, as Fleurie puts it: “Je sens la mort qui me ceurt” (I feel the death attacking me [v. 6543]); “...la misere // Qui par mon corps traverse, // Qui au lit de la mort me verse” (the suffering that invades my body and takes me to the deathbed [vv. 6552–6554]). Fleurie’s parents experience a series of physiological and psychological symptoms that lead them closer to the presence of death. Just like Fleurie, they suffer from a sense of severe corporeal degradation:

La mort qui fait de moi bersaut,

La mort qui me tient en douleur,

La mort qui me tolt la couleur

La mort me fait plus noir que meure

Le cueur, le corps, la povre chiere. [vv. 4912–4917]

[Death that set eyes on me, death that keeps me in pain, death that took away my (healthy) color, death that makes me blacker than a blackberry, the heart, the body, the wretched flesh].

Such feelings of effacement are present not only at a corporeal level, but also through an invasion of their inner, emotional space. The flexible linguistic structure of the plays allows lexical liberties such as the repetition of the word “death” and a series of metaphors centered on it. This stylistic configuration yields to the creation of a generous semantic space in which the mother can talk about grief as an almost material entity that invades her heart and provokes an atomization of her inner self. It is within the framework of such atomized images that she feels both her own death and that of her daughter:

Hé Dieu, com grant douleur amere

Me point au cueur, douce pucelles,

Je voy sallir mille estincelles

Pleignes de larmes et de deuil

Sitot que voy devant mon oeil

Ma belle fille, mon enfant,

A qui le cuer par force fent,

Fent et perse de part en part

Et m’est avis que le depart

Sera bien tost d’elle et de moy. [vv. 4860–4869]

[Alas God, as great bitter pain stings my heart, sweet girls, I see thousands of sparks full of tears and mourning getting out // As I see in front of my eyes my beautiful girl, my child whose heart dies because of (demonic) force, (whose heart) splits and is torn, I think that both her and my death will not be far away].

The father also feels death as a type of material force that finds its way through his body: “la mort mon cuer par my traverse” (Death is crawling through my heart [v. 5092]). Fleurie’s uncle, King Alari, replicates the sensation of death that his niece is feeling: “Hé Dieu, que le cuer me souppire, // Trop empire; // Je desire // Que je muire // Puis que la mort veult destruire // Ma nyesse” (Alas God, that my heart cries, suffers even worse; I desire that I die because death wants to destroy my niece [vv. 6108–6113]).

Looking at the demoniac generates therefore a vocabulary consisting of grief, tears, bereavement, and an acute feeling of death, all elements associated with the act of mourning. The latter was a notion that was rather problematic in both classical and early-modern thought, especially in its manifestation as female lament and grief. For instance, classical thinkers such as Seneca⁴¹ condemn the excess of prolonged grief as an unnatural desire characteristic to women and to “uneducated” and “uncivilized” subjects. Christian authorities like John Chrysostom (d. 407) vituperate against the uncontrolled bodily movements performed by women afflicted by immoderate grief during the process of mourning.⁴² Thus the sexualization of mourning becomes a constant topos in the corpus of courtly romances⁴³ while late-medieval Church reformers like Jean Gerson (d. 1429) refer to the act of excessive mourning and prolonged grief (*tristitia*) as an anti-Christian attitude. During such states, points out Gerson, the Christian subject risks deflecting attention from both the practical and spiritual concerns of her well-being. Sadness, therefore, does not have a utilitarian role, but only a destructive one leading to death, and despair.⁴⁴ Poets like Petrarch, in contrast, maintain that the intensity of male bereavement has beneficial effects upon the transformation of the self although he qualifies excessive female mourning as an act belonging to the domain of the pathological⁴⁵:

I was so constituted that I found pleasure in what men find the contrary of pleasure; in some way I was softened and caressed by my own troubles. Nothing did me more good than my weeping; a torrent of tears extinguished the flames of my heart....⁴⁶

For both male and female characters who witness the scenes of possession, the logic and language of bereavement and acute grief are an integral part of such Petrarchian explorations of the self in which the subject finds in grief a mode of

paying attention to his own emotional development. Moreover, the vocabulary of mourning allows those close to the possessed to develop a different emotional cartography and to explore how the interior and exterior of their bodies are affected by similar sensations that the demoniacs themselves are experiencing: physical pain, somatic troubles, and emotional disarray.

Bereavement over the dying body of the demoniac becomes therefore another mode of attention, to use Csordas' formulation, together with transferential mobility and sensorial responses. This process of echoing the condition of the possessed at a mental, affective, and psychosomatic level is based on "seeing" as the dominant mode of engagement. Indeed, the possessed subject is first and foremost apprehended at a visual level. Whenever they *look at* the demoniac, both Floquart's and Fleurie's parents automatically enter an economy of suffering marked, as I have shown earlier in the chapter, by physiological and emotional changes. For instance, several times in the play, Fleurie's mother proclaims her woe and sensation of death once she visually perceives the state of her daughter:

Son dart en moy, lasse, chetive

Ne je ne croy point que je vive

Jour ne sepmainne.

Puis que je voy en telle peinne

En tel deluge

La belle ou estoit mon refuge. (vv. 4919–4924)

[The dagger of death inside me (makes me) miserable and sick // I no longer think that I'll live another day or week. As I see in such pain, in such trouble the beautiful girl who used to be my sanctuary].

Fleurie's father displays a similar state of sorrow that is induced at a visual level: "Helas, j'ay veu que je menoie // Pour elle grant joie et grant feste; / /Or n'ay je cheveux en ma teste, // Quant je la voy" (Alas, I wanted to be happy for her; Now I am really wretched when I see her [vv. 5248–5251]). In these instances, we notice that the object of their vision, that is, the possessed, is not an exterior entity that entirely troubles their sense of self-containment. As I have shown in the first part of this chapter, mystery plays are situated within the larger late-medieval anxieties regarding the dangerous status of the possessed precisely as an abnormal subject that challenges the normative sense of subjectivity. But the emotional reactions of characters like Fleurie's parents show the capacity of the plays to counter-act such perspectives. Indeed, they replace the "gaze" with what art historians like Jill

Bennett call “empathic vision,”⁴⁷ that is, a zone of “embodiment of sensation that stimulates thought.”⁴⁸ In this sense, mystery plays encourage feelings of empathy towards the demoniac which converge with modes of attention towards her. Bereavement, sensorial responses to pain, and transferential mobility create the possibility for an ethical dimension in which the economy of gazing based on forensic examination envisaged by theologians like Jean Gerson is replaced with embodied vision. Seeing in this case involves an *affective* dimension.

When Fleurie’s parents look at their demoniac daughter they feel her, they align their mental state and the somatic experiences of their bodies to those of the possessed. Such a process through which one subject follows the affective thread of another person is termed the “transmission of affect” by Teresa Brennan.⁴⁹ Taking inspiration from psychoanalysis and neurosciences, Brennan argues that this process takes place at a social level, being an interaction among people, but it also involves the biological and physiological specificity of a particular individual.⁵⁰ In fact the physiological aspect is central in Brennan’s definition of affect. Indeed, the latter represents a “physiological shift accompanying a judgment.”⁵¹ It is this sensory information that we feel in relation to a particular object, situation, or person that can be projected onto somebody else. Thus, the alignment of one’s sensorium to that of another person, an act of entrainment, in neurological vocabulary as Brennan reminds us, shows that we are not self-contained subjects. Contrary to that, one’s physiological symptoms can be “dumped” onto someone else. The plays encompass in great detail the complexities of this transmission of affect. They effectively show how the demoniac’s sensorial reflection to the material presence of demons inside their bodies gets transferred onto those who are looking at them. The somatic vulnerability of the possessed *affectively* contaminates/touches the others who thus step into the space of the sensorium of the demoniac without becoming possessed themselves. Nevertheless, the witnesses to the act of possession become subjects in this process as they can reflect in their own psycho-somatic way to the bodily pain and the mental discomfort that afflict the demoniac. Their *affective* attitude, in Brennan’s sense, as a physiological response accompanying a judgment, or as “empathic vision” opens up an ethical space. To a certain extent, in the plays, the possessed subjectivity is not constituted of a series of symptoms that are converted into a narrative via the sovereign gaze of the doctor or the theologian. Instead, the possessed in such instances produces a type of knowledge of embodiment, a set of sensory reactions, involuntary and biological in nature but conveyed at a social level.

In the two sections of this chapter, I have shown that the encounter that mystery plays stage with the possessed produces a double type of relationality. On the

one hand, the demoniac, with her hybrid, “monstrous” gestures and speech, does challenge the sense of selfhood the able-bodied subject possesses. On the other, the same self-contained subject enters an *affective* mood manifested through volatile psycho-somatic experiences when witnessing scenes of possession. In other words, the demoniac, as a vulnerable subject, that is, a subject exhibited in her absolute physical and mental suffering, produces in addition to a certain anxiety, a new type of corporeal investment and attention towards one’s self. The next chapter will analyze the sociology of these modes of attention towards the demoniac and the ways in which the community surrounding the possessed discusses the symptomatology of possession and negotiates modes of care ranging from empathetic vocabularies to complex rituals such as exorcism.

Notes

1. Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints’ Lives: Abbot John of Cantimpré, Christina the Astonishing, Margret of Ypres, and Lutgard of Aywières*, ed. and with an introduction by Barbara Newman, trans. Margot H. King and Barbara Newman (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 247.
2. Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints’ Lives*, 247.
3. Quoted in Dyan Elliott, “The Physiology of Rapture and Female Spirituality,” in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, eds. Peter Biller and Alastair Minnis (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1997), 141–73. The quotation comes from p. 156.
4. Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints’ Lives*, 247.
5. Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
6. Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).
7. Brian Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 30.
8. Levack, *The Devil Within*, 30.
9. Andrieu de la Vigne, *Le Mystère de saint Martin*, ed. André Duplat (Geneva: Droz, 1979).
10. Margrit Shildrick, *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity, and Sexuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 19.
11. Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 45.
12. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 53.

13. Arnold of Villanova, *De parte operativa* quoted in Jean-Marie Fritz, *Le discours du fou au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 1992), 207.
14. Fritz, *Le discours du fou*, 201.
15. Arnold of Villanova, *De parte operativa* quoted in Fritz, *Le discours du fou*, 201.
16. Arnold of Villanova, *De parte operativa* quoted in Fritz, *Le discours du fou*, 201.
17. Aleksandra Pfau, *Madness in the Realm: Narratives of Mental Illness in Late Medieval France* (unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, 2008); Fritz, *Le discours du fou*, 200–13; Claude Gauvard, *De grace especial: crime, état et société en France à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1992), 2 vols.
18. Irina Metzler, *Fools and Idiots? Intellectual Disability in the Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 148–56.
19. *Grand Coutumier de Normandie* quoted in Fritz, *Le discours du fou*, 200.
20. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).
21. Gréban, *Mystère*, 160.
22. André de la Vigne, *Mystère de saint Martin*, 457. According to the stage directions Prince Tetradius is “Maistre dudict desmonyacle” [the guardian of this demoniac].
23. André de la Vigne, *Mystère de saint Martin*, 456.
24. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 6.
25. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).
26. Rosalyn Diprose, *Corporeal Generosity: On Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas* (New York: SUNY Press, 2002).
27. Diprose, *Corporeal Generosity* quoted in Shildrick, *Dangerous Discourses*, 26.
28. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1962).
29. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 35.
30. Thomas Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 243.
31. David Howes, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002); *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2003).
32. Kathryn Linn Geurts, *Culture and the Senses: Bodily Ways of Knowing in an African Community* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).
33. Paul Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).
34. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 244–45.
35. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 244–45. Literary historians like Carrie Noland, inspired by the field of sensuous scholarship, point out that one can isolate a sixth sense which she calls kinesthetic sensations and which is the result of the coalescence of personal bodily engagement with culturally informed bodily techniques.

See Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 8–9.

36. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 244.
37. Michel, *Mystère de la Passion*.
38. Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media, and Politics*, trans. Graham Burchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
39. In the sense that the demoniac loses her vital breath.
40. Michel de Certeau, *La possession de Loudun* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973); Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London: Routledge, 2004).
41. Seneca, “Consolation to Marcia,” in: *Hardship and Happiness*, trans. Elaine Fantham, Harry M. Haine, James Ker, and Gareth D. Williams (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 13: “No animals mourn their offspring for long, apart from human beings; they encourage their own grief, and the duration of their affliction depends not on what they feel but on what they decide. You can tell it is not natural to be broken by grief because, first of all, the same bereavement wounds women more than men, barbarians more than people of peaceful, cultured races, and the uneducated more than educated.”
42. John Chrysostom quoted in Carol Lansing, *Passion and Order: Restraint of Grief in the Medieval Italian Communes* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 101: “For in the lament and in mourning they display themselves: they bare their arms, tear their hair, lacerate their cheeks. Some women do this from grief, others to show off, yet others with a shameless spirit bare their arms while men are watching.”
43. For a detailed analysis of sexualization of mourning see Megan Moore, “Chrétien’s Romance of Grief: Widows and their Erotic Bodies in *Yvain*,” in *Masculinities and Femininities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Fred Kiefer (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 101–15; Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 111–12. For a chronological analysis of the attitudes towards female grief, mourning, and widowhood see Leslie Abend Callahan, “The Widow’s Tears: The Pedagogy of Grief in Medieval France and the Image of the Grieving Widow,” in *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages*, eds. Cindy L. Carlson and Angela Jane Weisl (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 245–63. Abend Callahan shows that when male protagonists of the courtly romances and chansons des gestes perform similar “immoderate” gestures of mourning they are deprived of any sexual connotation. See Abend Callahan, “The Widow’s Tears,” 253–54.
44. Jean Gerson, “Consolation sur la mort des amis,” in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Mgr Glogieux, vol. 7 (Paris: Desclée, 1966), 320: “du damage qui fait pleur et tristesse a la personne qui l’a; car c’est une chose qui naturellement corrompt la santé d’un chascun, et corporelle et espirituelle, et aucunefois donne la mort. Pourquoi dit le sage: plusuers sont mors par tristesse et n’y a point d’utilité en ycelle” [the damage that crying and sadness provoke to the person (that perform these acts); because crying

and sadness destroy clearly destroy everybody's health both corporeal and spiritual and sometimes provoke death. That is why it is written in the *Ecclesiastic* (30, 25): a lot of people died of sadness and there is no usefulness in it (in sadness)].

45. What Seneca condemns in Marcia's desire and pleasure for prolonged pain resurfaces in Petrarch as a typical case of what Juliana Schesari labels as "the gendering of melancholia," a process designating "the split between a higher-valued form understood as male and a lower-valued one coded as female" in *Gendering Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 162–63. Indeed, the male grief for the dear one, the object of concrete mourning, enters a Freudian circuit and transforms itself into melancholia, a state in which the object of mourning no longer exists, but the subject is still libidinally invested in it. The moment the act of mourning enters the public space, the same Petrarch becomes disturbed by it. The emotional intensity of female ululations that grieve on the streets of the city acquires a pathological dimension that requires their confinement within the private space of the house. Such is Petrarch's desire that he expresses directly in a letter addressed to Francesco da Carrara in 1373: "Some old dowager dies, and they carry her body into the streets and through the public squares accompanied by loud and indecent wailing so that somebody who did not know what was happening could easily think that here was a madman on the loose or that the city was under enemy attack (...) This custom is contrary to any decent and honorable behavior and unworthy of any city under your rule. I wish you would have changed it. In fact, I am not just advising you, I am (if I may) begging you to do so. Order that wailing women should not be permitted to step outside their homes; and if some lamentation is necessary to the grieved, let them do it at home and do not let them disturb the public thoroughfares," quoted in Schesari, *Gendering the Melancholia*, 163.
46. Petrarch, *Letters from Petrarch*, ed. and trans. Morris Bishop (Bloomington, IN and London: Indiana University Press, 1966), 220.
47. Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
48. Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, 8.
49. Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2004).
50. Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 3.
51. Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 5.

Effacing Demons

Storytelling, Healing, and Ritual

Following the heuristics of anthropologists who studied possession in non-Western contexts, medievalists and early-modernists point out that demonic possession is a matter of cultural constructionism. The act of possession involves primarily a process of formation of personal identity: the demoniac performs her condition following certain scripts encoded in her socio-religious environment.¹ These scripts are subjected to evaluation from the part of those witnessing such acts of possession. Moreover, both demoniacs and exorcists learn these scripts and, in the case of the former, even have a “drama coach” who tells them how to perform the symptoms of possession.² Such a constructionist model of possession can definitely help us recognize certain discursive patterns according to which the subjectivity of the demoniac is shaped. However, as the previous chapters have shown, this model does not account for the fact that possession is essentially a spectacle of illness centered around a vulnerable and unique body endowed with an agential capacity which manifests itself both at the level of language and embodied knowledge. As we have seen, the scripts of possession consisting of certain gestures, vocabularies, and collective embodied reactions function with a greater degree of emotional flexibility than the type of controlled behavior that social constructionism allows. Furthermore, from psychologists and medical anthropologists³ we also learn that a body dominated by physical and mental distress has its own embodied

story to tell. Such a story is unique to each subject and requires empathetic skills from both medical and family caretakers in looking, interpreting, listening for the symptoms and the painful effects that a particular malady provokes. In fact, this polyphonic narrative which includes not only the voice of the sick person, but the concerns, anxieties and perceptions of the members of the family and of the wider community is labelled under the umbrella of “illness”⁴ as opposed to “disease” which designates what “the practitioner creates in the recasting of illness in terms of theories of disorder.”⁵ Illness, in other words, captures the domain of the singular,⁶ of the personal lived experience⁷ as opposed to sickness which operates within the sphere of a type of scientific knowledge which is universally true⁸ and not filtered through individual somatic and affective patterns.

Similarly, we can think about demonic possession less in terms of a carefully orchestrated set of scripts and more as “illness” understood as a set of micronarratives about the symptomatology of possession and an affective heterogeneous assemblage of caring practices that the members of demoniac’s entourage and her community initiate. Taking off from this initial set of reflections, some of the questions that this chapter asks are: what does it mean for the caregivers and a particular community to actually live within spatio-temporal proximity with a person affected by demonic possession? What metaphors, “stories” or narrative patterns, and vocabularies do they use to convey the volatility of the signs of possession which are confined to personalized, inner experience? Finally, how is the futuristic dimension of healing in the form of potential therapies, which range from informal palliative cures to more ritualized methods such as exorcism, encompassed in the plays? Central to this chapter is the idea that the subjectivity of the demoniac cannot be separated from her corporeality which lies at the intersection of personal and collective narratives in which the etiology of possession and healing mechanisms are collectively discussed among parents, caretakers, and figures of religious authority such as Jesus Christ or local saints. The structure of this chapter follows, therefore, the trajectory of these micronarratives of illness and healing woven within the body of the mystery plays. The first part will be dedicated to the ways in which the symptomatology of possession coalesces with quotidian narratives of ordinary encounters between community members, parents of the possessed, and their immediate kin. I argue that the particular formal structure of the plays that privilege first person narrators transforms them into what an anthropologist like Didier Fassin calls *lieu d’écoute* or a place to listening⁹ in which caregivers, family members, or simple witnesses tell and retell the signs of possession they noticed at the demoniac and the latter’s affective and somatic bodily changes. Listening, observing the metamorphosis of such bodily

changes, coining multilayered vocabularies to designate the physical and mental pain the demoniac suffers or potential informal and ad hoc cures to alleviate the intensity of such pain are all modes of social and empathic attention towards the possessed subject. The last part of the chapter analyzes more formalized rituals of healing and care such as exorcism. As a typical sovereign act in which the male prevails over the female, the divine over the demonic, the Church hegemonic knowledge over lay healing practices,¹⁰ exorcism appears, especially in the light of 16th and 17th century accounts of possession, as a never acknowledged form of torture in which the body of the possessed is simultaneously and contradictorily exposed to both violence and healing. The latter is articulated paradoxically through a grammar of bodily destruction involving hitting, pinching, or burning bodily extremities such as finger nails, among other violent practices. In this sense, exorcism renders the demoniac to the status of what Giorgio Agamben calls “bare life,”¹¹ that is, it reduces the subject to its purely biological dimension solely meant to legitimize a hegemonic religious order. Mystery plays, I argue, retain the formulaic structure of exorcism and, to a certain extent, its paradoxically violent therapeutic character. But, in addition, they cultivate a restorative and transformative type of approach based on the plays’ effort to narrativize the mechanics of exorcism and, thus, to place it within wider explanatory frameworks based on the narratives of all those involved in the act of exorcism: the possessed, the exorcist, the demons, and the witnesses to act of possession. In fact, as I will demonstrate in this last part of this monograph, in the plays the exorcism’s symbolic logic, its *modus operandi*, and its therapeutic efficacy are not ready-made meaningful elements, but are captured within their processual dimensions and efforts to create meaning and modes of encounters for the possessed herself, the members of her community, and the exorcist.

Micronarratives of Possession as Illness

In medieval theological and medical thought, the symptomatology of possession is a multilayered process which is carefully negotiated among ecclesiastic authorities and lay subjects. As we have seen in Chapter 1, towards the end of the Middle Ages deciphering the bodily symptomatology of possession becomes a real forensic exercise and a predominantly male prerogative. In this sense, Jean Gerson’s series of questions¹² scrutinizing the nature of female spirituality shapes the way symptoms of possession are conceptualized. In mystery plays, Gerson’s rigid schema of interrogating the demoniac’s body is replaced with

a multitude of micronarratives in which the caretakers of the possessed, both close family members and witnesses, employ their own idioms to describe the symptoms that the demoniacs experience. Thus, in the plays, talking about possession is essentially an ordinary act inscribed within the structures of the quotidian. Parents confess to friends, relatives, or simple acquaintances about their child's possession:

Alfons [père du Floquart]:
Hé, Placidus, dieu gart, compere! [v. 1728]
(...)
Si ennuyé suis de ma vie
Que je ne sçai a qui le dire.

Placidus:
Pourquoi, Alfons?
Alfons:
Pourquoi, beau sire? [vv. 1737–1739]
(...)
Mon filz. Je doubte que nature
L'ait mis en oubli de tous poins,
Car il n'a teste, piez ne poings [vv. 1745–1747]
(...)
Sours, aveugle, demoniacle [v. 1749]

[Alfons (Floquart's father): Hello, Placidus, may God protect you, sir! (...) I am so upset with my life that I don't know to whom I should talk about it. Placidus: Why, Alfons? Alfons: Why, my lord? My son. It's quite likely that God forgot about him, As he doesn't have a head, legs or fists (...) Deaf, blind, possessed].¹³

Moreover, naming particular bodily signs such as catatonic states, convulsions, contortions, or disarticulated language according to which a subject is qualified as possessed is also transmitted using demotic linguistic patterns. In Andrieu de la Vigne's *Mystère de saint Martin*,¹⁴ those who witness the act of possession utilize rich emotional vocabularies to convey the pain the demoniac's experiences: "Monsieur, vella le douloureux // Redardez la pitié terrible // Jamais povre homme langoureux // Ne souffrit douleur si horrible" (Sir, look at this wretched one, Look at the poor man // Never has a poor sick man suffered such horrible pain [vv. 7552–7555]). Thus, in such conversations, the possessed is considered a sick person, a *langoureux*. This is also the case with Floquart, one of the demoniacs in *Mystère de saint Remi*, whom his father introduces to the healing saint, Remi, as: "Ung patient a en ce lieu, // Malade merueilleusement"

(A sick man here (who is) extremely sick [vv. 2230–2231]). In addition, the parents or the caretakers of the demoniac acknowledge psycho-somatic marks of possession such as the lack of sensation, the uncontrollable motility of the demoniac, or the lack of her cognitive reactions but they narrate such symptomatology by showing a great deal of emotional attention towards the possessed. In Jean Michel's *Mystère de la Passion*,¹⁵ the mother of the possessed girl unambiguously labels her daughter's jittery bodily movements, gnashing her teeth, and her overall antisocial behavior as consequences of demonic vexation: "Las, ma fille n'a point d'arrest: // le dyable sans cesser est prest // a la travailler nuyt et jour [vv. 8115–8117] (...) Elle est hors du sens // et grisse les dents // brule et art tout ens // quant du dyable qui est dedens // est tant tourmentee" (Alas, my daughter cannot be still: the devil is ready to vex her day in and out (...) she has lost her mind and is gnashing her teeth, she is boiling inside when she is tormented by the devil inside her [vv. 8143–8147]). Medieval theologians would have inscribed such symptoms within a scientific discourse about demonic corporeality and discernment of spirits and, thus, circumscribed the demoniac within the parameters of a pathological condition. However, in the plays, characters like the Canaanite woman filters such etiology of possession through affective lenses which, as I have shown in Chapter 3, can even affect her own sense of personhood. Indeed, for her the girl's condition represents not just an incident of possession but "nostre piteux cas" (our pitiful case [v. 8114]). Narrating similar marks of possession is not only the prerogative of parents. Anyone close to the possessed states and restates the multilayered somatic, cognitive, and emotional disarray the demoniac experiences. In *Mystère de saint Remi*, the possessed girl's cousin reiterates her bodily destruction and pain which are both the result of demonic vexation: "Sa fille est en piteux arroy [v. 5814] (...) L'enemi plein de desarroy // La destruit et met dessoubtz." (His daughter is in a wretched state (...) The enemy full of trouble destroyed and put her down [vv. 5816–5817]). In the same play, secondary characters who impersonate normative Catholic virtues such as charity map out similar features of possession filtered through a personal emotional take out: "A ung malade douloureux // De tous membres langoureux // Il est de ses yeux aveugles // Il n'a sens en lui ne qu'un bugle, // Il est fol et demoniacle" (At a painfully sick person who cannot use any of his limbs, he is blind, he has as little brain as an idiot, he is mad and possessed [vv. 1967–1971]).

These examples show that in the plays the demoniac gains collective attention. His or her cognitive and corporeal features are not singled out as "anomalous" per se. The demoniac's caretakers and members of his community display

empathetic mechanisms towards the demoniac's condition. The same tendency towards empathy is also visible in more formal acts of care such as the exorcism.

Medieval Exorcisms: Between Liturgical Formulae and Sainthood

Medieval exorcisms draw inspiration from those that Christ performs in the New Testament¹⁶ in which epileptic and mute demoniacs are healed through his charismatic power. As Florence Chave-Mahir notices,¹⁷ such exorcisms are rather simple in their structure as they do not contain any incantations or particularly long scripts. Jesus chases the demons using short adjurations in the form of apotropaic formulas such as *Vade retro Satana* [Step back, Satan]. This charismatic type of exorcism which, in addition, includes the invocation of the name of Jesus as a guarantor of a successful exorcism is further transmitted to the Book of Acts¹⁸ and, during the early Middle Ages, included in hagiographical literature. For instance, in one of these earliest vitas, *Life of Saint Martin* belonging to Sulpicius Severus (d. 425), the saint exorcizes the demoniacs by performing symbolic gestures such as the imposition of the hands on the head and in the mouth of the possessed.¹⁹

A more formalized version of exorcism encompassing the use not only of symbolic gestures and sacred objects but also of incantations and formulae emerged in the second part of the 10th century in Mainz, the religious capital of the Carolingian empire.²⁰ A series of this type of exorcisms based both on a script and on a symbolic gestural economy are included in a collection of liturgical texts assembled in the *Pontificale Romano-Germanicum* ("The Roman-Germanic Pontifical") [henceforth PRG].²¹ The pontifical, composed and copied in the scriptorium of the Abbey of St Alban between ca. 950–963/964, contains 258 sections pertaining to various liturgical rituals, votive masses, sermons for special occasions, and juridical texts.²² The manuscript contains several exorcisms²³ which display similar scenarios and vocabulary. The demon is labelled under various denominations ranging from common names such Satan and *diabolus* [devil] to more complex ones which allude to the Biblical background and its misdeeds and identity: *inventor malitiae* [discoverer of malice],²⁴ *inmundi spiritus* [unclean spirit],²⁵ *dux tenebrarum* [lord of darkness].²⁶ The semantic regime cultivated in the exorcisms is that of order, adjuration, and imprecation. Demons are ordered to leave the human bodies they inhabit and, in this sense, a series of verbs at the imperative mood are used: *exi* [exit],²⁷ *recede* [withdraw],²⁸ *cede* [depart].²⁹ Orders are also expressed using a verb in first person indicative: *exorcizo* [exorcize],³⁰

adiuro [adjure],³¹ *coniuro* [conjure].³² Such formulations, that linguists classify as operator,³³ are of liturgical origin and have the role of fulfilling a prayer or an order. In this model, the speaker addresses a recipient in order to persuade the latter to act either to fulfill a request (for prayers) or to clear out (in case of demons).³⁴ In some exorcisms, through this type of operative linguistic markers, demons are ordered to leave specific portions of the body: “*adiuro te, inmunde spiritus per adventum domini nostri Iesu Christi, ut tollas te et exeas ab omnibus membris istius (...) a capite, a capillis, ab humeris, a collo, a branchiis, a dorso, a scapulis, ab interioribus partibus, a ventre, a genibus*” [I adjure you, unclean spirit by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you raise yourself and you exit from all of its members (...), from the head, from the hair, from the shoulders, from the neck, from the bronchi, from the back, from the shoulder blade, from the interior parts, from the belly, from the knees.]³⁵ The exorcist, therefore, maps out a bodily microcosm which is connected to a macrocosm dominated by God.³⁶ This microcosm is based on a particular bodily order in which the bodily parts are enumerated vertically from the head to the knees and, then, from the exterior to the interior of the body. The role of the exorcism is to reestablish this order temporarily taken over by the demonic presence; hence the need to reassemble the body and its parts according to a hegemonic order in which the divine prevails over the demonic. That is why the other *dramatis personae* in the exorcisms in the *PRG* are from the sphere of the divine. Many of the exorcisms open with prayers and invocations addressed to God and Jesus Christ. Moreover, the authority of the exorcisms and of their performers is legitimized by the appeal to the divine order. The name of the God, Jesus, and, sometimes, of Biblical narratives are, therefore, invoked in uttering the exorcist scripts: “*Adiuro te ergo, immundissime spiritus (...), in virtute nominis domini nostri Iesu Christi, qui post lavarum Iordanis in desertum ductus est*” [Thus I conjure you, the most unclean spirit, in the virtue of the name of our lord Jesus Christ, who after the baptism in the river Jordan, went into the wilderness.]³⁷

The exorcism is not only a script but a multimedia spectacle as well. Exorcisms are accompanied by prayers which can take several aspects from singing litanies to psalms and hymns.³⁸ A ritualized gestural economy is also part of the script of exorcism. The priest places his hand on the head of the demoniac and makes the sign of the cross three times while adjuring the demon to exit the body. Such gestures derive from the liturgy of baptism and they have an apotropaic role. The whole body and sometimes bodily parts of the demoniac are, therefore, purified from demonic influence and recaptured within the divine order. Through the same mechanism of operative linguistic markers used to adjure the demons,

the exorcist-priest invokes God. He bows in front of the altar, sings the Psalms, and then prays to God.³⁹ As for the possessed, he is led to the altar where he has to confess his sins and the circumstances that led to his vexation by demons.⁴⁰ As part of the purification process, fasting is required on the part of the demoniac and his body is anointed with holy water, oil, and salt: all elements endowed with a strong Christian symbolism and, therefore, used in benedictions throughout the Middle Ages.⁴¹ From these scenarios we notice that the exorcism scripts contained in PRG designate a liturgical ritual in which the exorcist, in accordance to the etymological root of the Greek word, is a punisher of unclean spirits he chases from humans in the name of God.⁴²

Florence Chave-Mahir remarks that such exorcism formulae, systematized in the PRG and deriving to a large extent from the baptismal exorcism, morph into other genres crystallized during later centuries.⁴³ Medieval hagiographic narratives preserve a significant number of elements originating in liturgical exorcisms such as those from PRG while adding new scripts centered on the use of particular material items like the crucifix or ecclesiastical insignia such as the stole.⁴⁴ Similar to the scripts contained in PRG, in these *vitas*, the demoniac's family brings him or her to the saint's tomb where a mass is celebrated.⁴⁵ Prayers, exorcisms, and litanies, accompanied by recommendations for fasting, are part of the healing process. Relics play a major role in staging the exorcism: a particular saint's bodily parts or pieces from objects in his or her possession are placed on the demoniac's head or belly, all bodily places presumably under demonic occupancy. Salt and holy water are also important elements together with gestural economies such as making the sign of the cross and the reading of exorcisms and of passages from the Bible and other biblical related materials. As for the liturgy of the exorcisms which are performed in the hagiographies, it is quite similar to the one contained in PRG. Using verbs in the imperative or indicative present, demons are chased out of humans' bodies in the name of God and Jesus Christ: "I command you by Jesus Christ, son of God, who triumphed over your tricks and your power upon the cross, who in all justice has taken back the power which you fraudulently usurped."⁴⁶

A similar model of exorcism containing liturgical formulae and symbolic gestures and objects is present in medieval popular collections of exempla. Caesarius of Heisterbach (d. 1240) mentions the case of a woman named Jutta whose body begins to swell as a result of the demonic presence inside her.⁴⁷ The exemplum refers to this type of exorcism, a mix of both linguistic and non-linguistic elements, that helps Jutta recover. After she hears the formulaic adjuration, she can eventually move her limbs. In addition, the exorcist puts holy water in her

mouth and wraps his stole around her neck while he utters the exorcism.⁴⁸ The actual content of the adjuration and exorcism is not mentioned but the symbolic mechanism which makes this ritual effective is suggested in the text. Jutta's body exits demonic influence once she enters in contact with Christian material objects such as holy water or the exorcist's stole. In his analysis of Renaissance exorcisms, Armando Maggi underlines that "exorcism is similar to a witch trial in that both operations compel devils to manifest their language, and thus to become vulnerable to human counter-rhetoric. In other words, exorcists and inquisitors are able to eradicate evil only insofar as evil turns into (visible) linguistic signs and thus becomes prey of a discourse invoking the extinction of evil itself."⁴⁹ Similarly, in Caesarius' exemplum, the volatile demonic idiom which puts Jutta into a semi-catatonic state can be overwritten and, ultimately, effaced only when a counter-rhetoric revolving around the materiality of both objects and words is activated.

In fact, materiality seems to be the key word in staging medieval exorcisms. As Maggi explains, demons are by definition invisible creatures which leave nevertheless visible, material traces on the skin surface. Thus, the only way they can be counteracted is through the creation of a performative and object-oriented idiom. Gerald of Wales (d. 1223) recounts a similar case to that of Jutta's in which the destructive effects produced as a result of demons' invisible presence within the interior of the body are annihilated through the use of sacred objects such as the Gospels or the saint's relics: "When the book of the gospels or the relics of the saints were placed, for example, upon a swelling in the throat, the demon would immediately go down in the entrails, and when the holy objects were placed there, it would descend into the privy parts of the body."⁵⁰ Towards the end of the Middle Ages, Johannes Nider (d. 1438), following Thomas Aquinas, becomes even more specific in distinguishing how some elements of the act of exorcism consisting of the use of holy water and the adjurations per se, follow different routes and affect demons differently. According to Nider, blessed water has a protective role of shielding the exterior of the body whereas the exorcism, presumably consisting of formulaic words is effective against demonic infestation inside the body.⁵¹ In fact, during the 15th century models of exorcisms consisting of similar liturgical formulae contained in PRG are renewed and assembled in inexpensive books of small to medium portable format. The manuals are inexpensive editions which are readily available.⁵² In analyzing their structure and role, Nancy Caciola points out that these manuals⁵³ revamp liturgical exorcisms convey the ideology of a triumphant church especially in the context of growing theological anxieties about the real presence of demons and the proliferation of witchcraft trials.

What is medieval exorcism then? From liturgical sources such as PRG, medieval hagiographies, collection of exempla, and manuals of exorcism we notice that the act of exorcism is an assembly of symbolic material objects, charismatic gestures, and formulae consisting of relics, holy water, salt, the Gospels, and adjurations whose role is to counteract the silent yet effective demonic element. In her analysis of the social and ideological role of ritual, Catherine Bell points out that that the ritual activity depicts, models, enacts, and dramatizes deeper societal values and ideas.⁵⁴ As a ritual, exorcism is also a prescriptive multidimensional construct aiming to preserve symbolic hierarchies in which the divine triumph over the demonic and the clergy over the laity. The latter is often silent or silenced by demons and present only as a subject displaying symptoms of demonic possession: swelling, incapacity of moving the limbs, or a total or semi catatonic state. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will analyze how mystery plays integrate rituals of exorcism and how they stage the actual process and techniques of healing of the demoniac. Given the linguistic flexibility of the dramatic text and its preference for an inchoate “I” who has the capacity to voice and narrate her subjectivity, I argue that the plays capture the minutiae of a transformative trajectory in which one can see how the possessed and those who witness her condition react corporeally, emotionally, and behaviorally to a therapeutic, yet hegemonic, ritual such as exorcism.

Performing Exorcism in the Mystery Plays

Twentieth century theater historians adopting an evolutionary perspective of the history of medieval drama have advanced the idea that medieval theater is a prolongation of medieval liturgy which explains certain liturgical formulae, including exorcism, present in medieval plays.⁵⁵ On the other hand, historians analyzing the structure and role of medieval exorcism have pointed out that the acts of exorcisms are veritable dramatic constructs in which an intense, and often violent dialogue takes place between demons and the exorcists.⁵⁶ It is beyond the scope of this book to discuss whether medieval theater in the vernacular is a mere derivation or not of early liturgy⁵⁷ or to challenge the ingrained performative character of medieval and early-modern exorcisms. What is at stake is to understand how exorcism as a ritualized multimedia assembly of material symbols becomes a therapeutic act which creates a new phenomenological dimension. This dimension can then accommodate the subjectivity and the so-called “wrong” corporeality of the possessed. Yet the formalist aspect is also important as such transformative acts occur under the umbrella of linguistic and gestural patterns deriving from

models of exorcisms developed in non-dramatic accounts (collections of miracles and exempla, hagiographies, or Biblical narratives and glosses) and to which the plays responds.

The Passion Plays tend to privilege the charismatic model of exorcism originating in the Biblical narratives. As we have seen, this model is based on short adjurations in the form of commanding formulae and expiatory gestures in which Jesus places his hands on the head of the demoniac girl. Similarly, according to the stage directions and some of the illuminations⁵⁸ in Jean Michel's *Mystère de la Passion*,⁵⁹ *La Fille* kneels in front of Jesus to be delivered and healed.⁶⁰ In Mercadé's *Passion* the scenario of exorcism is presented in more detail: "Cy est la femme de la Cananée a genoux devant Jhesus et on tient la fille a deux gens, laquelle est demoniacque, mais au commandement de Jhesus le dyable yssi hors de son corps"⁶¹ [Here the daughter of the Canaanite's woman kneels in front of Jesus and the girl, who is possessed, is held by two people, but at Jesus' order the devil is getting out of her body]. In the hagiographic plays, the exorcisms that saints perform are a mix of charismatic gestures, liturgical formulae, and sacred material objects. The scripts of exorcisms contained in the plays follow closely the format of those from PRG or the more recent manuals of exorcism from the 15th century. Used as linguistic markers, through verbs deployed in the imperative mood or in the indicative first person singular, demons are commanded to leave the human bodies: "je t'adjure, // Vuyde tost de [ce] povre corps" (I adjure you (to) evict from this wretched body quickly [vv. 7572–7573]).⁶² Other formulations are shorter but equally efficacious: "Va t'en de ci! (Go away from here [v. 6750])."⁶³ Others are more specific mapping out the route that the demon has to follow as the result of exorcism: "N'en parle plus, va t'en ta voie, // Passe en enfer legierement; Je t'en fais le commandement" (Stop talking, follow your way, Go to Hell quick; I am ordering you [vv. 6759–6761]).⁶⁴ As we see in *Mystère de saint Remi*, such liturgical formulae in the vernacular are followed by invocations of the divine and allusions to certain Biblical events:

Je te conjure du hault nom

De la tressainte trinité,
De la puissance et dignité
Du pere et filz et saint Esprit
Et du hault nom de Jhesuscrist,
De sa piteuse passion
Et de sa rexurrection [vv. 6020–6026]

[I conjure you in the great name of the holy trinity, of the power and dignity of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit and in the great name of Jesus Christ, of his compassionate Passion, of his Resurrection].⁶⁵

Just like older liturgical exorcisms and some of those encompassed in saints' *vitas* and collections of miracles, the exorcisms in the plays utilize sacred material objects as well, such as the holy water, the garments, the stole, the cross:

Ambroise, apportez mon estolle,
 L'eau benoïtte et les vestements [vv. 5883–5884]
 (...)
 car je voy [cy]
 Amit, tunique, mitre et crosse
 Et la chappe qui vient d'Escosse,
 Bien garnie de beau orfrois,
 Et puis l'eau benite et la croix.
 Y ne me fault rien oublier. [vv. 5899–5903]
 (...)
 Saint Benoit: Revestez moy (...).
 Que bonne oeuvre y puissons nous faire. [vv. 5910–5911]
 (...)
 Ambroise, je vueil de reschief
 Lire la legende doree
 Qui de Dieu est tant honnouree
 Apportez la moy! [vv. 5976–5979]

[Ambroise, bring my stole, the holy water and the garments (...) I see here the amice,⁶⁶ the tunic, the miter and the cross, And the robe coming from Scotland embroidered with beautiful orfrays, and then the holy water and the cross. I should not forget anything (...) Saint Benoit: Dress me so that we can make a good job (...) Ambroise, I want once again to read the *Golden Legend* which is so honored by God. Bring it to me!].⁶⁷

The *mystères* detail how liturgical objects are used according to both a narrative and symbolic logic. It is difficult to infer whether in the actual spectacles, these objects were real liturgical objects or simple props. However, by exhibiting the logic of their use the plays maintain the aura of exorcism but at the same time they render it less opaque. Furthermore, employing a non-liturgical book such as the *Golden Legend*, extremely popular among laity, the plays disclose some of their sources and bring religious practices closer to vocabularies of everyday life.

The laicization of the plays, nevertheless, is counter-balanced by the use of insertions into Latin whose role is to give ecclesiastic value to the exorcisms performed on stage. In *Mistere des Freres Prescheurs*,⁶⁸ the saint-exorcist recommends

in Latin that the demoniac has to fast, which is also one of the requirements for an exorcism to be successful: “Chers freres, en escript on treuve // Que se ung home a le diable au corps // Qu’on ne le peut chaser dehors // *Nisi in oration et ieiunio*” [Dear brothers, in the Bible it says that if a man is possessed by the devil we can chase it *only through praying and fasting* [vv. 3649–3652)].

Representations of demons are also similar to those from older models of exorcism. Indeed, just like in the PRG, devils carry out various negative connotations from denominations suggesting disgust (“Faulx ennemi plain de laidure!” False enemy full of filth! [v. 6002])⁶⁹ to metaphors which animalize demons (“Faulx serpent, crueux desloiaux, // Maucrueuse beste infernale” False, cruel, and disloyal serpent, infernal, vile beast [vv. 6729–6730]).⁷⁰ However, devils, silent creatures in the liturgical exorcisms and other genres containing scripts of exorcism, are the ones who narrate the innate technicalities of exorcism. In the Passion Plays the classic adjuration formula, *Vade retro Satana* [Step back, Satan] shows its intended effects, the destruction of demons. For instance, in Gréban’s *Mystère de la Passion*⁷¹ the demon Fergalus recounts the type of effects that the exorcist’s adjuration produces on him even if the Passion Plays do not contain any formulaic exorcisms as such: “En peine et dueil et griefve ardeur, // plus ardent que barre de fer, // m’en revois courant en enfer // moy plonger au fond de palus” (In pain and sadness and in painful burn hotter than a hot iron I am getting back to Hell plunging into the deepest pit [vv. 12233–12335]). The exorcism, therefore, provokes on demons similar types of physical and psycho-somatic reactions to those that demoniac themselves experience as a result of demonic vexation. In the hagiographic plays where the scenes of exorcisms are more developed, the emotional and physical transformations that demons undertake are more complex as well. Just like in the Passion Plays in these sources demons also suffer from a general state of overall uneasiness and physical discomfort: “Regnault, que tu me fais de mal! // Tu m’etz pire que reagal!” (Regnault, you are hurting me! For me, you are worse than poison! [vv. 3676–3677]).⁷² In fact just like the demoniacs whom he possesses Sathan displays veritable symptoms of possession such as convulsions, painful sensations, and the incapacity to contain his own self:

Que diable ai? Le cuer me point! [v. 6885]

(...)

Je tremble, je suis malmené,

A la mort je suis condempné [vv. 6888–6889]

(...)

Ta priere me fait dommage

Je suis honnis, haro, j’enrage! [vv. 6896–6897]

[What the hell is wrong with me? The heart fails me! (...) I am shaking, I feel tormented, I am condemned to death (...) your prayer hurts me, I am doomed, help, I am enraged!].⁷³

In other plays,⁷⁴ the stage directions are even more graphic in detailing the psycho-corporeal reactions that demons have as a result of the performance of exorcism: “Icy doibt avoir ung petit diableteau sortant de son lit, et s’en va en enffer, cryant et braillant comme ung diable”⁷⁵ [Here there must be a little devil jumping from its bed (that) is going to Hell yelling and bawling like a devil]. Furthermore, special effects such as fumes and cannon balls intensify the effects that words pronounced by the exorcist have on demons: “Icy sort une fumee et ung canon de dessoubtz la fille et Astaroth sort de la fille”⁷⁶ [There are fumes and a cannon and Astaroth jumps from underneath the girl].

Language is another domain that gets affected under the influence of exorcism. As Armando Magi⁷⁷ and Nancy Caciola⁷⁸ have remarked, the demonic idiom, albeit unintelligible according to logocentric standards, is nevertheless a perverted form of the linguistically accepted language which the exorcist uses. In the plays, the demons’ idiom either belongs to the domain of animality (“Cra, cra, cra, cra!” utters Belzebus in *Mystère de saint Remi*)⁷⁹ or mimics the formulaic aspect of exorcism performed in Latin: “*Farro barras triffle gricors!*”⁸⁰ In both cases, the demonic linguistic idiom is a materialization of otherwise invisible, aerial, and immaterial entities such as demons. In other words, by means of exorcism, the incongruous demonic dialect is vocalized and, thus, can be effaced and order restored.

Exorcisms, therefore, render demons vulnerable subjects in the same way their victims, the demoniacs, are. Thus, as the result of the formulaic words, augmented in the plays with the use of proxies and special effects, demons’ language and bodies disintegrate and lose linguistic and, respectively, anatomical and somatic coherence. The unmaking of demons and their effacement are thus the proof that exorcism is efficacious and its formulaic words do possess what is called *virtus verborum*. As Béatrice Delaurenti has shown,⁸¹ the characteristics of words to have an immediate effect on humans, objects, animals or aerial creatures like demons was labeled in medieval theological and medical thought as *virtus verborum*. The latter refers to any type of incantatory formulae from exorcisms to therapeutic charms, and amulets.⁸² The power of words, that is, their *virtus*, is the equivalent of what linguists designate the literal meaning as opposed to the figurative one.⁸³ In an enunciative context, *virtus* designates the primary meaning of a word independent of any emotional or intentional markers of the speaker. In the case of exorcism, the *virtus* of the adjuration consists precisely of the activation of

its primary meaning. This means that formulaic words such as *vade* [step back], *exi* [exit], or *recede* [withdraw] and their equivalent in vernacular are intrinsically endowed with an excess of power to effect precisely what they claim they do, namely to efface demons. Furthermore, the inner materialism of the mystery plays with their propensity for special effects in which demons are evicted out of humans in the sound of cannon balls together with the real use on stage of religious artifacts such as crosses, Gospels, relics, or even books in vernacular (*Légende dorée* [The Golden legend]), confer credibility to an abstract notion such as *virtus verborum* as a generative principle of exorcisms. Moreover, in the plays, the *virtus* of the formulaic words contained in exorcism is not simply presupposed but is part of a processual staging of exorcisms: from the incipient moment of vocalizing the need for exorcism and the display of its mechanics and of the actors involved in it (demons, the exorcist, the possessed, and the witnesses) to the moment of the successful healing resulting in the destruction of demons and the creation of a new phenomenological reality for the demoniac.

Healing Narratives

I argue that mapping out exorcism with such dramatic attention strengthens its therapeutic potential by showing that this ritual is not a simple prescriptive script, but an act with a real transformative value. In this sense, the plays suggest that if demons can be “sickened” given the intrinsic potency of the formulaic words then demoniacs can be healed as well through the activation of similar rhetorical mechanisms legitimated by the ingrained quality of *verbum verborum* that exorcism scripts contain. What are these mechanisms which yield to the healing of the demoniac? Taking inspiration from medical anthropologists, Thomas Csordas⁸⁴ in his study of the phenomenology of healing the Charismatic Catholics classifies therapeutic frameworks or environments (shrines, consulting rooms, etc.) that use rhetorical procedures such as persuasion or suggestion to induce a sense of healing in afflicted patients as exogenous techniques.⁸⁵ However, he argues, a more efficient procedure in understanding how religious healing operates is to focus on the somatic, emotional, and physiological response that a patient, sometimes even unconsciously, gives to his or her suffering in encounters with sacred symbols, vocabularies and gestures.⁸⁶ Such corporeal, spiritual, and mental responses are part of what Csordas calls “endogenous healing processes,”⁸⁷ which is contingent upon the performance of a rhetoric of transformation.⁸⁸ To be efficient, the latter has to show predisposition, that is, to provide the supplicant with a strong

sense that healing is possible. In addition, such rhetoric must be empowering and convincing for the sick subject that his or her exposure to spiritual therapy is efficacious. Finally, argues Csordas, the rhetorical language involved in endogenous therapies must create a new phenomenological reality for the supplicant in which she has a different ontological awareness about her new bodily, affective, and cognitive status.⁸⁹

The scripts of exorcisms encompassed in the plays have all the components to be considered as effective endogenous therapies through which the demoniac ends up experiencing a post-illness emotional and physiological change: predisposition, empowerment, and transformation.⁹⁰ As we have seen in the first part of this chapter, the exorcisms in the mystery plays are not readily available scripts, simply inscribed within the body of the text. Contrary to that, they are accompanied by a rhetoric of persuasion surfacing through various micronarratives in which possession is multiple times diagnosed using both secular and religious vocabularies. In addition, several therapies are envisaged, discussed, and negotiated among the members of demoniac's family and community: devotional techniques, potential medical treatment dismissed after short deliberation as ineffective, and eventually charismatic healings under the form of exorcism performed by Jesus or saints. Therefore, the plays offer a generous space in which various witnesses to scenes of possession, close members of the demoniac's family, and, at times, the possessed herself can ruminate and be persuaded to use exorcism as an effective tool of healing. For instance, in *Mystère de saint Martin*, one of the witnesses at the demoniac's suffering, introduces the figure of saint Martin as a healer who conveys efficacious therapeutic techniques and vocabularies: "Premier: Hellas, monsieur, je vous conseille // Que vous aillez vers le saint homme. Tetradius: Je m'en voys" (The First: Alas, sir, I advise you that you go to the holy man. Tetradius: I am on my way [vv. 7516–7517]). In *Mystère de saint Remi* the caretakers of the possessed takes her to various sites of pilgrimages such as Rome and Reims, both traditionally renowned throughout the Middle Ages⁹¹ as healing places and both under the patronage of different saints, namely saint Peter and saint Remi, respectively. In approaching these sites, they are already culturally and affectively predisposed towards embracing the vocabulary, gestures, and material symbols of healing by means of exorcism:

Pere
Chier sire plain d'umilité
De pitié et de courtoisie,
Ami de Dieu en dignité,
Servant a la vierge Marie,

Je te recommande Fleurie,
 C'est ma fille, c'est mon enfant.
 Vela ci pleine de sottie
 Dont douleur le cueur me fent [vv. 6653–6660]
 (...)
 Si suppli a ta sainteté
 Que sa douleur li soit tarie.
 Oste la de l'aversion
 Qui passe douleur infenie [6669–6672]

[Father: Dear sir full of humility, pity and courtesy, friend of God in dignity, servant of Virgin Mary, I present you Fleurie, she is my daughter, my child. Here she is full of folly (and her) pain breaks my heart (...) I beg to your sainthood that her pain stops. Take away the enemy that provokes enormous pain].

From this example, we notice that cultural and religious reasons are not the only criteria according to which Fleury's father is persuaded that exorcisms attached to religious healings are an efficacious therapy. He is convinced that the healing techniques that the saint performs would also bring the much desired somatic and affective changes in his daughter such as the disappearance of pain and of the state of nervous malaise as a result of demonic possession. The figure of the exorcist is also a means of persuading the supplicant or his or her family that the exorcism scripts are of therapeutic value. If in the hagiographic plays, there is a certain negotiation in order to determine whether a doctor or a saint should diagnose and treat a demoniac,⁹² in the Passion Plays, the figure of Christ as performer of miraculous healings and exorcisms guarantees the success of the healing.⁹³ Thus, in Gréban's *Mystère de la Passion*, Ysore, the servant, tells the demoniac's mother about the healing potential that Christ has: "Maistresse, la nouvelle est telle // que Jhesus, ce prophet saint, // en qui tant de puissance maint, // vient visiter ceste contree; // se la chose luy fust monstree, // il la guerist, n'en doubtez pas" (My lady, the news is that Jesus, this holy prophet, within whom there is so much power, has just visited our land; if the (possessed) girl had been shown to him, he would have healed her, you can be sure about that [vv. 12277–12282]). By presenting exorcism as a culturally, religiously, and therapeutically valid practice, mystery plays establish a solid ground in which the caretakers, the healers, and, to a certain extent, the demoniac herself are aware and persuaded by the efficiency of such technique for healing represented by exorcism.

Of equal importance in the phenomenology of healing is the rhetoric of empowerment consisting of both verbal and non-verbal compelling scripts through which the supplicant becomes corporeally and affectively open towards

the power of the divine.⁹⁴ As we have seen, as a formulaic semantic ensemble endowed with an innate transformative power and augmented by a network of symbolic gestures and material objects, exorcism is contingent upon the activation of an economy of empowerment: the exorcist is triumphant over demons and the divine order over the demonic one. But the same symbolic grid confers the demoniac a sense of empowerment as well which eventually translates in his or her actual healing. In the act of exorcism, the exorcist, whether Jesus and the saint, touches the possessed and in this “intimacy of touching,” as Csordas calls it,⁹⁵ the demoniac is somatically and psychologically altered. In staging these volatile moments of empowerment through exposure to the sacred language, the plays operate within a regime of materiality conveyed through the use of props such as cannon balls, fumes, and gestures of supplication in which the possessed receive the exorcist’s touch while in a kneeling position. For example, in both Jean Michel’s play and Andrieu de la Vigne’s *Mystère de saint Martin* the haptic therapeutic gesture of Jesus and saint Martin’s, respectively, is synchronized with the fumes, the noise, and the devil’s distorted voice and gestures as he is exiting the body of the possessed. Moreover, this suspended moment of material animation coexists with the erratic momentum in which the possessed exits her “crip time,” that is the temporal framework in which she lived with the somatic symptoms of possession with no prospects for a curative change,⁹⁶ to enter a new ontological dimension of corporeal and psycho-somatic transformation.

The efficiency of exorcism as a patient response therapeutic technique⁹⁷ is perhaps even more evident in the way the plays stage this curative dimension of demonic possession. In previous narratives of possession encompassed in iconographic sources, hagiographic texts, or collections of miracles and exempla, the possessed is healed by means of exorcism, but no details regarding the corporeal changes that this process entails are given. The plays provide a rich description of the way in which the demoniacs experience the curative time of healing at a phenomenological level. As I have shown in the previous chapters, demonic vexation yields to the creation of a disembodied assembly, a *corps morcelé*, as Lacan famously puts it, in which the demoniac is painfully aware of his or her bodily parts: the neck, the head, the ears, the eyes, the entrails, etc. Demons pollute these parts being perceived as parasitic creatures that leave unfamiliar yet agonizing bodily and mental traces. In other words, they unmake the human body. Exorcism, in exchange, restores this sense of bodily totality and wholeness. In *Mystère de saint Remi*, after his exorcism, Floquart acknowledges that:

Santé sens bien en moy venir

Maintenant voy mon mal fenir,

Fenir voy tout mon nuisement,

Venir voy mon alegement

J'ay ma clarté,

J'ay en mon cuer vraie santé,

J'ay sens, vertus, force et avis (vv. 2322–2329)

[I feel health coming inside me, Now I see my evil coming to an end, I see all my torment ended, I see my relief coming. I have my clarity, I have in my heart real health, I have perception, virtue, power, and judgement].

In Jean Michel's *Mystère de la Passion*, *La Fille* becomes conscious of her new bodily reality and self: “je suis garie plainement; plus n'ay querelles ne murmures” (I am totally healed; I no longer speak in tongues [vv. 8391–8392]). Fleurie in *Mystère de saint Remi*, experiences the same transformative state from a somatic reality in which she was disposed of her perceptive self to a bodily and mental wellness in which perception and cognition are reinstituted: “Je voy que par vous // Est mon ame en mon corps remise” (I see that because of you my soul is reunited with my body [vv. 6932–6933]). Interestingly enough, the somatic awareness of healing functions according to the same affective mechanisms like demonic possession. In Chapter 2, I have shown that at the peak of vexation, the demoniac displays a momentum of intense self-perception in which she feels snapshots of agonistic pain in which her self is almost effaced. A contemporary theorist like Brian Massumi, I have argued, calls this moment of somatic intensity which cannot be translated within semantically and semiotically structures as affect.⁹⁸ Healing, as somatic awareness of high intensity which escapes narration, takes place precisely within the affective interstices of a body which feels “whole” again instead of being short-circuited by diffuse yet intensive painful sensations provoked by demons. Exorcism then plays the role of a reparatory act. It comes as no surprise that in *Mystère de saint Martin*, the demoniac whom saint Martin heals refers to him as his “le reparateur” (the mender [v. 7582]).

From these micro testimonials, it seems that healing, functioning as a mending and a restorative mechanism, occurs not only at a physiological level but has a psycho-affective dimensions as well. Thus, in post-exorcism curative time, emotions of fear and grief accompanied by a generalized sense of anxiety and bodily loss are counter-acted by an overall sense of well-being, of “joie, liesse” (joy, gaiety [vv. 2317]), as one of the demoniacs in *Mystère de saint Remi* puts it. Moreover,

as Thomas Csordas remarks,⁹⁹ part of the endogenous process of healing is for the supplicant to bring his or her memories and past experiences in conjunction with religious vocabularies, symbols, and meanings. Similarly, as a result of exposure to exorcism, the demoniacs in the play acquire a great degree of psychological awareness which allows them to look introspectively and to scrutinize models of behavior, gestures, or words they performed during their vexation. For example, the young brother who is part of the Dominican monastic community in *Mistère des Freres Prescheurs*, Le convers, becomes conscious of certain cultural practices that he transgressed: “Cher pere, humblement // Et courtoisement // Je vous cry merci. // Je sçay securement // Que tresfaulcement // J’ay mon veu transsi” (Dear Father, humbly and politely I ask to forgive me. I know for sure that I betrayed my vow wrongly [vv. 3685–3690]). The *Fille* in Jean Michel’s play has the same type of ethical conversion: “Mais pardonnés moy les injures // et les offenses interdites // que j’ay tant proferees et dictes // contre Dieu et contre vous, mere; // j’en ay au cueur douleur amere // et me desplaist moult la follye” (But forgive me the insults and the curses which I professed and said against God and against you, mother; I have bitter pain in my heart and I dislike demonic vexation a lot [vv. 8393–8398]). The inchoate “I” who narrates these changes is very different from the same “I” who, as we have seen in Chapter 2, has accounted, via the framework of vocality, for the pain caused by demonic attacks. Indeed, such “I”s who have already undergone healing have a sense of socio-cultural direction shaped by the adherence to a particular set of normative practices and affective types of behavior: joy, a sense of personal and collective responsibility, and awareness about societal and religious taboos.

Stemming out from Catholic concerns to strengthen and inculcate orthodox devotional practices, the plays most definitely stage idealized narratives of successful religious healing through exorcism even if in practice the latter had extremely violent aspects.¹⁰⁰ But, in addition to the “ideological” part, what the plays capture is the lived experience of healing surfacing in the form of spiritual, psychological, and somatic changes that the possessed undergoes.

Notes

1. Brian Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 168–190; Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 80–87; Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe*

Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 4–5.

2. Levack, *The Devil Within*, 155–56.
3. Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Arthur Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Rita Charon, *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
4. Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*, 3–5.
5. Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*, 5.
6. Charon, *Narrative Medicine*, 9.
7. Kenneth M. Boyd, “Disease, Illness, Sickness, Health, Healing and Wholeness: Exploring Some Elusive Concepts,” *Journal of Medical Ethics: Medical Humanities* 26, no. 1 (2000): 9–17: “is a feeling, an experience of unhealth which is entirely personal, interior to the person of the patient.” The quotation comes from p. 10.
8. Charon, *Narrative Medicine*, 9.
9. Didier Fassin, *Des maux indicibles. Sociologie des lieux d’écoute* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004).
10. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 255.
11. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 81–86.
12. Jean Gerson, *The Concept of “Discretio spirituum” in Jean Gerson’s “De probatione spirituum” and “De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis,”* trans. Paschal Boland (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1959), 30: “Tu, quis, quid, quare, Cui, qualiter, unde, require. Who is it to whom the revelation is made? What does the revelation itself mean and to what does it refer? Why is it said to have taken place? To whom was it manifested for advice? What kind of life does the visionary lead? Whence does the revelation originate?”
13. *Mystère de saint Remi*, ed. Jelle Koopmans (Geneva: Droz, 1997).
14. Andrieu de la Vigne, *Le Mystère de saint Martin*, ed. André Duplat (Geneva: Droz, 1979).
15. Jean Michel, *Mystère de la Passion*, ed. Omer Jodogone (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1959).
16. Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist. A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Tübingen: J. C.B. Mohr, 1993); Florence Chave-Mahir, *L’Exorcisme des possédés dans l’Église d’Occident (Xe–XIVe siècles)* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2011). All gospels except John’s contain various miracles in which Jesus heals and exorcizes demoniacs. For a complete list of these exorcisms in the New Testament see Chave-Mahir, *L’Exorcisme*, 80, n. 96.
17. Chave-Mahir, *L’Exorcisme*, 80–81.

18. For instance, in the *Book of Acts* Paul heals a slave girl who has divinatory powers because she is possessed by a spirit (16:16) while in Jerusalem Peter heals the sick by casting his shadow upon them and exorcizes those “vexed with unclean spirits” (5:16).
19. Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de saint Martin*, trans. Jacques Fontaine (Paris: Cerf, Sources Chrétiennes, 1967).
20. Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 94.
21. *Le Pontifical romano-germanique du Xe siècle*, eds. Cyrille Vogel and Reinhard Elze (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1963), 3 vols.
22. Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 94.
23. *PRG II*, cxiv–cxxxiii, vol. 2.
24. *PRG II*, cxvii, 3.
25. *PRG II*, cxvi, 1.
26. *PRG II*, cxv, 42.
27. *PRG II*, cxvii, 4.
28. *PRG II*, cxvi, 1.
29. *PRG II*, cxv, 33.
30. *PRG II*, cxv, 6.
31. *PRG II*, cxv, 33.
32. *PRG II*, cxv, 37.
33. Irène Rosier-Catach, *La parole efficace. Signe, rituel, sacré* (Paris: Seuil, 2004) quoted in Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 98.
34. Irène Rosier-Catach, “Regards croisés sur le pouvoir des mots au Moyen Âge,” in *Le pouvoir des mots au Moyen Âge*, eds. Nicole Bériou, Jean-Patrice Boudet, and Irène Rosier-Catach (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 511–85, esp. 518–19.
35. *PRG II*, cxix, 1.
36. For more examples and a more detailed analysis of this type of bodily mapping see Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 104–09 and, for a later period, Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 256–62.
37. *PRG II*, cxviii, 5.
38. Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 110–11; “L'exorcisme des possédés, une parole efficace d'après quelques oeuvres doctrinales des VIe–XIIIe siècles,” in *Le pouvoir des mots*, 305–25.
39. *PRG II*, cxv, 3.
40. Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 110.
41. Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 111.
42. For a more detailed discussion of the role of the exorcist as a punisher of demons in medieval thought see Chave-Mahir, “L'exorcisme des possédés,” 314–18.
43. Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 134–57; “Medieval Exorcism: Liturgical and Hagiographical Sources,” in *Understanding Medieval Liturgy: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. Helen Gittos and Sarah Hamilton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2016), 159–75.

44. Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 153–55; Pierre-André Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale (XIe-XIIIe siècles)* (Paris: Cerf, 1985).
45. I base my analysis of models of exorcism in hagiographical sources on Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 134–57.
46. *Vita Norberti Archiepiscopi Magdeburgensis*, ed. R. Wilmans, MGH SS 12 (Hanover: Hahn, 1856), 670–706, c.14, 686 quoted in Chave-Mahir, “Medieval Exorcism,” 170: “Adjuro te, per Iesum Christum filium Dei, qui tuas in cruce vicit insidias et potestatem, quam iniuste et fraudulenter rapueras super hominem, iuste et potenter receipt.”
47. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans. H. von Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland, vol. 1 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929), 271.
48. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, 271: “when he broke off his adjuration, it (the body) began again, moving now the legs and now the hands. Then lifting the shroud he dipped it in holy water and put some in her mouth, and this she began to swallow eagerly. At last he took his stole and bound it round her neck as he uttered the exorcism, and in this way he drove the devils from the body.”
49. Armando Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric: A Study of Renaissance Demonology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 99.
50. Gerald of Wales, *The Jewel of the Church*, trans. John J. Hagen (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 45.
51. Johannes Nider, *Formicarius* (Cologne, 1480), Book 5, Chapter 6.10; Jean Nider, *Les Sorcières et leurs tromperies*, trans. and ed. Jean Céard (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2005).
52. Caciola, *Discerning Demons*; Florence Chave-Mahir and Julien Véronèse, *Rituel d'exorcisme ou manuel de magie? Le manuscrit Clm 10085 de la Bayerische Staatsbibliothek de Munich (début du XVe siècle)* (Firenze: Sismel, 2015), 52–62. Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).
53. For an exhaustive list of these manuscripts see Chave-Mahir and Véronèse, *Rituel d'exorcisme*, n. 185, 55.
54. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 43.
55. E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925); O. B. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965).
56. Chave-Mahir, *L'Exorcisme*, 177–221; Michel de Certeau, *La possession de Loudun* (Paris: Gallimard/Juillard, 1990); Élise Dupras, *Diabes et saint. Rôle des diables dans les mystères hagiographiques français* (Geneva: Droz, 2006); Jelle Koopmans, *Le théâtre des exclus au Moyen Âge: hérétiques, sorcières et marginaux* (Paris: Imago, 1997), 53–60.

57. For an interesting argument that challenges the idea that medieval is a derivative of liturgy see Carol Symes, "Liturgical Texts and Performance Practices," in *Understanding Medieval Liturgy*, 239–67; "The Appearance of Early Vernacular Plays: Forms, Functions, and the Future of Medieval Theater," *Speculum* 77, no. 3 (2002): 778–831.
58. Jean Michel, *Mystère de la Passion*, BnF-Vélin 600 (Paris: Antoine Vérard, 1494): <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8626768z.r=mystere%20de%20passion%20jean%20michel?rk=42918;4>.
59. Jean Michel, *Mystère de la Passion*, ed. Omer Jodogone (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1959).
60. Michel, *Mystère de la Passion*, 112: "La Fille *a genoulx*" [La Fille *in her knees*].
61. Mercadé, *Passion d'Arras*, edited by Jules-Marie Richard (Arras: Société du Pas-de-Calais, 1893), 92.
62. de la Vigne, *Le Mystère de saint Martin*.
63. *Mystère de saint Remi*.
64. *Mystère de saint Remi*.
65. *Mystère de saint Remi*.
66. Another type of liturgical vestment used in Catholic liturgy and rites.
67. *Mystère de saint Remi*.
68. *Mistère de l'institution de l'Ordre des Freres Prescheurs*, eds. Simone de Reyff, Guy Bedouelle, and Marie-Claire Gérard-Zai (Geneva: Droz, 1997).
69. *Mystère de saint Remi*.
70. *Mystère de saint Remi*.
71. Arnoul Gréban, *Mystère de la Passion*, eds. Gaston Paris and Gaston Raynaud (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1878).
72. *Mistère des Freres Prescheurs*.
73. *Mystère de saint Remi*.
74. de la Vigne, *Le Mystère de saint Martin*.
75. de la Vigne, *Le Mystère de saint Martin*, 461.
76. Jean Michel, *Mystère de la Passion*, 112.
77. Magi, *Satan's Rhetoric*, 99–112.
78. Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 247–50.
79. *Mystère de saint Remi*, v. 2317.
80. *Mystère de saint Remi*, v. 2313.
81. For a detailed mapping of the theological and medical argument which defend or contradict the idea that words have an ingrained power ("virtus verborum") see Béatrice Delaurenti, *La puissance des mots «virtus verborum»: Débats doctrinaux sur le pouvoir des incantations au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Cerf, 2007).
82. The amulets designate words written on pieces of parchment and are attached to sick people's necks for therapeutic purposes. For an in-depth analysis of the way medieval doctors used *virtus verborum* as a healing technique see Delaurenti, *La puissance des mots*, 95–102.

83. Delaurenti, *La puissance des mots*, 101.
84. Thomas J. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 18.
85. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 18.
86. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 18–27.
87. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 25.
88. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 27.
89. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 27.
90. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 27.
91. André Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge: d'après les procès de canonization et les documents hagiographiques* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1988); David Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing in Early Modern Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Michael Goodich, *Violence and Miracle in the Fourteenth Century: Private Grief and Public Salvation* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995); Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle*.
92. *Mystère de saint Remi*: “Se c’est n’est Dieu qui le garisse // Ne qui le mal de lui tarisse. Fiziciens riens n’y feroient, // Sirurgiens ne s’i congnoistroient” (Unless it is God who could heal him and who could make him better. Doctors will not do anything, surgeons won’t know anything [vv. 1872–1875]).
93. In the Passion Plays, Jesus’ miracles are contested by the Jews and labelled as not being accurate and real. Such attitude is speculated in the plays to create vocabularies of racial hate from the part of the Christians towards the Jews. In this sense, the plays respond to larger antisemitic discourses from the end of the Middle Ages. See Andreea Marculescu, “Teaching to Hate through medieval theater: hate, violence, and the invention of Piety,” special issue of *Literature Compass* 13, no. 6 (2016) on ‘Emotions and Feelings in the Middle Ages,’ ed. Anthony Bale and Lynn Ramey, 389–99.
94. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 30.
95. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 31.
96. Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 34–37: “What happens, though, if we do not move “beyond somatic changes” but think about queer/crip temporalities *through* such changes, through these kinds of skeletal dislocations, or illness, or disease?” (The quotation comes from p. 34).
97. That is endogenous therapy, according to Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 18.
98. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 28.
99. Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, 35–38.
100. For an analysis of the narratives of possession and of exorcism as a technique of torture during the early and mid-16th century see Andreea Marculescu, “Mystery Plays Re-Loaded: Performing Demonic Possession in the *Histoires véritables*,” in *French Renaissance and Baroque Drama: Text, Performance, Theory*, ed. Michael Meere (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2015), 1–21.

Conclusion

In an article published in 1928, Louis Aragon and André Breton give a new definition to hysteria: “L’hystérie n’est pas un phénomène pathologique et peut, à tous égards, être considérée comme un moyen supreme d’expression” [Hysteria is not a pathological phenomenon and can, in all respects, be considered as a supreme means of expression].¹ In referring to this idea Janet Beizer argues that the question to be asked is “Whose expression?”² The latter is without doubt a legitimate question because deciphering the signs of hysteria inscribed on females’ bodies and interpreting their “free” language is the prerogative of doctors or (in this case) surrealist poets. Similarly, the symptomatology of demonic possession, a genealogical antecedent of hysteria, has been the result of a multilayered discourse coined by medieval theologians, authors of *exempla*, hagiographers, or natural philosophers. The body of the female demoniac has been used to advance theological frameworks of knowledge about the human body and, especially, about the interior of the human body, the relation between the natural world and the supernatural one, and about the material and the spiritual side of existence. In a larger socio-cultural context, possession has also been a barometer allowing distinctions between a normative idea of a human being as opposed to a corrupted, imperfect one, touched and, hence, soiled by a presence epitomizing the very opposite of Christian anthropology, namely the devil.

In this monograph, I have attempted to pursue Louis Aragon and André Breton's bold idea to consider the signs of demonic possession less as part of a pathological condition and more as features of a specific type of corporeality predicated upon vulnerability rather than "abnormality." Taking inspiration from phenomenology, affect studies, and disability studies, I have redirected attention towards analyzing the effects that demoniac's contortions, shrieks of pain, catatonic states, and "inarticulate" language produce. Can we think, I asked, of a corporeal agency of the "anomalous" body of the possessed independent of reason and articulated language? What happens when such distorted bodies enter zones of visual, haptic, and aural contact with able-bodied individuals? Can possession be considered a producer of a sensuous type of knowledge that alters the way sovereign subjects perceive themselves?

Late medieval religious theater consisting of hagiographic and Passion Plays has turned out to be a capacious domain that staged such encounters. Its special prosodic and semantic structure encompasses micronarratives of possession told, to a large extent, from the perspective of an inchoate "I" who fuels sensations of physiological and mental pain within the surface of the text. The lyric permissiveness of the plays also captures the emotional and psychosomatic reactions that the witnesses to the acts of possession have experienced in their contacts with demoniac. The plays, I have argued, allow us to understand demonic possession as a series of bodily narratives of pain, of healing, and, ultimately, of witnessing. The first chapter analyzed the genealogy of the concept of demonic possession together with the various complexities it had at the end of the 15th century when theologians started analyzing manifestations of female spirituality activating forensic vocabularies. The second chapter has focused on analyzing the ramifications of the demoniac's idiom. I have shown that once we stop analyzing the demoniac's glossolalia not as articulated speech but as vocality, a feature attached to the voice, we can have access at a plethora of sensations, thoughts, and affects that the demoniac experiences during his or her satanic torment. The last two chapters were geared towards an analysis of the somatic and social type of attention that the demoniac receives. I have demonstrated that the so-called demoniac's abnormality has the capacity to affect the others sensorially and to mobilize systems of informal and formal care, such as exorcism into place.

My project has therefore sought to fill a gap left untouched by medievalists and early-modern scholars who have been studying the notion of demonic possession systematically in the past few decades and shown the seminal importance of this concept in the intellectual and spiritual life from the end of the Middle Ages. In so doing, scholars have been looking at more formal type of sources such as

theological and medical tracts. Through these lenses they have interpreted possession as a framework allowing them to distinguish the normal from the abnormal and the pathological body from the normative one. Mystery plays, I have argued, shift from the pathological to the ethical by offering a more nuanced view of how possession was experienced at a sensorial and corporeal level within circumstances approximating daily life scenarios.

In my project, I have also sought to recuperate a series of texts—mystery plays—considered by generations of secular literary historians as the demoniac figures of the French literary canon because they considered them to be defiled by doctrinaire religiosity, and thus to have nothing in common with the “great” Renaissance and neo-classical authors who created the “great tradition” of French drama. That is why I have deliberately avoided disciplinary labels such as literary genre, pre-Renaissance theater, comic diableries and focused instead on theater as a media event that shaped the public sphere from the end of the Middle Ages.

Notes

1. Louis Aragon and André Breton, “La Cinquantenaire de l’hystérie,” *La Révolution surréaliste* 4 (15 March 1928): 22.
2. Janet Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 54.

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Index

A

Actes des Apôtres, 15
affective framework of possession, 6, 71,
96–97
Agamben, Giorgio, 103
Albert the Great, 41–42
Alcher of Clairvaux, 33–37
Anatomia Magistri Nicolai Physici, 33
Anima, 34–37
animal spirit, 33
Anthill (Formicarius), The, 5
anti-theatrical prejudice, 10–15
anxiety, 85
Apologeticum, 27
Aquinas, Thomas, 41, 109
Aragon, Louis, 127–128
Aristotelian philosophy, 10, 29, 32–33, 41
Aristotle, 32
Armstrong, Adrian, 14
Arnold of Villanova, 85

Art de rhétorique, 10
Augustine, Saint, 29–31, 34, 37, 45, 58

B

babbling, 72–73
Bailey, Michel, 4–5
bare life, 103
Bartholomew the Englishman, 41
Beizer, Janet, 2, 4, 127
Bell, Catherine, 110
Bennett, Jill, 95–96
Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate, 5
Body in Pain, The, 69
Bono, J., 32
Brennan, Teresa, 5, 96
Breton, André, 127–128
Brigitte of Sweden, 45
Brown, Peter, 62
Butler, Judith, 7, 59

C

Caciola, Nancy, 3, 35, 40, 42, 45, 109, 114
 Caelius Aurelianus, 30
 Caesarius of Heisterbach, 37–38, 108
 Canaanite woman and Jesus, 13–14, 60–61, 64
Canon episcopi, 36
 Cassian, John, 27–28, 35–36
 Cavarero, Adriana, 7, 9, 19, 60
 Charcot, Jean-Martin, 3
 Chartier, Alain, 10
 Chave-Mahir, Florence, 106, 108
 Chen, Mel, 6
 Christina the Astonishing, 43
 Chrysostom, John, 94
 Clare of Montefalco, 40
 Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome, 87
 collective possession, 92
Conferences, The, 27
Confrérie de la Pasion, 15
 Constantine the African, 42
 corporeal encounters, 88–97
 activation of cultural practices in, 88–89
 sensuous scholarship on, 88
 transferential mobility in, 91
 vocabulary of pain and, 90
 corporeality
 collective attention on, 105–106
 gender and, 43–44
 language and, 7–8
 theater and, 15–18
 Council of Basel, 5
 Csordas, Thomas, 88, 115–116, 120

D

D'Ailly, Peter, 4, 44–45
De Apibus, 39
 death in demoniac's vocabulary, 93–94
 mourning and grief and, 94–95
 De Certeau, Michel, 1, 58
Découpages, 13

Delaurenti, Béatrice, 114
 De la Vigne, Andrieu, 8, 11, 61, 83, 104, 118
 Delirium, 30
 demoniacs. *see also* possession
 anxiety from gestures and speech of, 85
 bodies of, 39–41, 84–85, 101–102
 bodily interiority, exteriority, and the
 divine of, in the 12th and 13th centuries, 32–41
 corporeal encounters with, 88–97
 in early-Christianity, 28–32
 in the French mystery plays, 60–66
 “I” of, 14–15, 19, 70, 92
 monstrous encounters with, 83–87
 objectivization of, 3–4
 pathologizing of, 41–48, 85
 solipsistic tones in, 71–76
 somatic bodily changes in, 81–82
 verbal outbursts of, 67–71
 De Reims, Ermine, 5
 Deschamps, Eustache, 10
De Trinitate, 37
Dialogue on Miracles, 37–38
Dialogus Beatae Mariae, 9
 Didi-Huberman, Georges, 2, 4
 Diprose, Rosalyn, 88
 Discernment of spirits, 30–31
 Dolar, Mladen, 72

E

Early-Christianity, demoniacs, demons, and
 aerial creatures in, 28–32
 Easter, 57
 Elliott, Dylan, 4, 42, 44
Elucidarium, 9
 empathic vision, 96
 Enders, Jody, 16–17, 65
 endogenous healing processes, 115–116
 Ermine of Reims, 44
 excess-speech, 67
 exorcisms, 39, 63–64, 103
 healing narratives and, 116

intimacy of touching in, 118
 language in, 114
 between liturgical formulae and sainthood,
 106–110
 performed in the mystery plays, 110–115
 therapeutic technique of, 118–119

F

Faral, Edmond, 13
 female spirituality, pathologization of, 4,
 41–48
 feminist thought, 4
Formes fixes, 11–12
 Foucault, Michel, 1–2, 3, 45, 85
Four Book of Sentences, 37
Frames of War, 7
 Frazer, James, 65
 French Eugenics Society, 2
 Fritz, Jean-Marie, 85

G

Galen, 30, 32–33, 42
 Garland-Thompson, Rosemarie, 84
 gaze of the theologian, 5
 gender and possession, 4, 41–48
 Gerald of Wales, 38, 109
 Gerson, Jean, 4, 45, 94, 96, 103
Glossa ordinaria, 9
Golden Legend, 9, 112, 115
 Gréban, Arnoul, 8, 9, 13, 83, 86
 on exorcism, 113, 117
 on vocality, 64, 66, 68, 73
 Gregory the Great, 40
 Grosz, Elizabeth, 6, 88
 Guerts, Kathryn Linn, 88

H

healing narratives, 115–120
 heart, the, 33–34, 37
 Henri of Freimer, 44
 Henry of Langestein, 4, 44–45
 Herod the Great, 60–61
 Hildegard of Bingen, 37
 Hincmar of Reims, 8
 Hippocrates, 30, 42
*Histoire de la ville et comté
 de Valenciennes*, 64
Historia scholastica, 9
 Hollywood, Amy, 4
 Holy Ghost, the, 37, 45–46
 holy water, 108–110, 112
 Howes, David, 88
 Hugh of Saint Victor, 33
 hysteria, 2–3, 127

I

identity in possession, 1, 101
 illness, micronarratives of possession as,
 103–106
Inquisitio, 4
 Institoris, Henricus, 46
Institutions, The, 27
Instructif de la seconde rhétorique, 10–12
 “I” of the possessed, 14–15, 19, 70, 92
 Isaac of Stella, 33
 Isidore of Seville, 40

J

Jacob of Voragine, 9, 40
 Judas Iscariot, 60–61

K

Kay, Sarah, 14
Kramer, Heinrich, 66
Kristeva, Julia, 84

L

Langlois, Ernest, 10
language
 corporeality and, 7–8
 in exorcism, 114
 self-perception and, 71
 verbal outbursts and, 68–70
Le Graveur, Jean, 5, 44
Le Jardin de Plaisance, 10
Levack, Brian, 3
Life of Christina the Astonishing, 67
Life of Saint Martin, 106
Literal Meaning of Genesis, 29, 31
lived body, 88, 102
logos, 59–60
Lombard, Peter, 37
Ludgard of Aywières, 81–82, 88–89
Ludolph of Saxony, 9

M

Madness and Civilization, 85
Maggi, Armando, 109, 114
Marculescu, Andreea, 77, 78, 125
Malleus maleficarum, 40–41, 46–47, 73, 74
Massumi, Brian, 6, 71
medical anthropology, 17
Medieval French drama
 corporeality and, 15–18
 language and corporeality in, 7–8
 mystery plays and medieval anti-theatrical
 prejudice, 10–15, 129

 Passion Plays in, 7–8, 128
 the possessed in, 60–66
Meditations on the Life of Christ, 9
Ménagier de Paris, 40
Mens, 31, 36, 37
Mercadé, Eustache, 8, 9, 64
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 6, 69, 88
Michel, Jean, 8–9, 86, 90, 105
 on exorcism, 111, 118
 on vocality, 63–64, 66–67, 69, 71–72
micronarratives of possession, 103–106
Mistère des Freres Prescheurs, 112–113, 120
Molinet, Jean, 10, 57–59
monstrous encounters, 83–87
mourning and grief, 94–95
Mulierculae, 36
Mystère de la Passion, 8, 13
 corporeal encounters in, 90–94
 exorcism in, 111, 113, 119
 monstrous encounters in, 83
 vocality in, 64–67
*Mystère de l'Institution de l'Ordre des Freres
 Prescheurs*, 12, 61
 monstrous encounters in, 83
Mystère de saint Martin, 8, 11
 corporeal encounters in, 89–90
 healing narrative in, 116
 micronarratives of possession as illness in,
 104–105
 monstrous encounters in, 83, 87
 therapeutic gesture of Jesus and Saint
 Martin in, 118
 vocality in, 61–63, 65, 73–74
Mystère de saint Remi, 8, 12
 corporeal encounters in, 90
 exorcism in, 111–112, 114, 118–120
 healing narrative in, 116–117
 micronarratives of possession as illness in,
 104–105
 vocality in, 61–63, 66–69, 73–74
Mystery plays, 10–15, 103, 129
 arrêt in, 15–16

performing exorcism in, 110–115
the possessed in, 60–66

N

narratives

healing, 115–120

of possession, 66–67, 102–103

naturalization of the supernatural, 4

natural spirit, 33

Nature of the Body and the Soul, The, 33

Nicolas of Lyre, 9

Nider, Johannes, 5, 44, 63, 81, 109

nuns, possession of, 57–58, 81

O

On the Proving of Spirits, 45

On the Spirit and the Soul, 34

Other, the, 5–6, 60

P

Passion d'Arras, 8

Passion Plays, 7–9, 48, 60

corporeal encounters in, 89

Jesus and the Canaanite woman's daughter
in, 13–14, 60–61, 64

performing exorcisms in, 111–115

pathologizing of demoniacs, 4, 41–48, 85

performativity, 59, 109

Peter the Chanter, 9

Petrarch, 94

Phenomenology of Perception, 69, 88

Physiological model of the spirit, 35–36

Plato, 35

Poétique de l'entredeux, 12–13

Pontificale Romano-Germanicum, 106–110,
111, 113

possession. *see also* demoniacs

affective state in, 6, 71, 96–97

collective, 92

defined in early-Christianity, 31–32

demarcation between the self and the

Other and, 5–6

entering through the nails and flesh, 40–41

gaze of the theologian on, 5

gender and, 4, 41–48

identity of, in Western thought, 1, 101

labeled hysteria, 2–3

micronarratives of, as illness, 103–106

mourning and grief over, 94–95

narrating, 66–67

of nuns, 57–58, 81

portrayed in Passion Plays, 17

symptoms of, 1–2, 6, 30

teleological approach to, 2

vocabularies of, 27, 44, 63, 101

voice of (*see* vocality)

witchcraft treatises on, 4–5

Postillae, 9

Post-Structuralism, 88

Pouchelle, Marie-Christine, 40

prejudice, anti-theatrical, 10–15

Pseudo-Albert the Great, 42, 43

Pseudo-Anselm, 9

psychoanalysis, 4, 5

Q

Queer and Affect Studies, 6

Questio, 4

R

rationality, 35

relationality, double, 96–97

Richer, Paul, 2

Richet, Charles, 2

Rimbaud, Arthur, 1
 Runalls, Graham, 7–8
 Rupert of Deutz, 37

S

Salernitan School, 33
 Scarry, Elaine, 69, 70
Secrets of Women, The, 42
 self and Other, demarcation between, 5–6
 self-perception, 71
 sensuous scholarship, 88
 Severus, Sulpicius, 8
 Shildrick, Margrit, 84
 Siebers, Tobin, 6
 situatedness of poetry, 14
 Sluhovsky, Moshe, 3
 solipsistic tones, 71–76
 Soranus, 30
 soul, the, 31
 existence of demons in, 37–38
Speculum Historiale, 9
 spirit, the, 32–35
 physiological model of, 35–36
 Sprenger, Jacobus, 46
 Stevenson, Jill, 17
 Stewart, Kathleen, 74
 Stoicism, 32
 Stoller, Paul, 88
 stories. *see* narratives

T

Taussig, Michael, 65
 Taylor, Jane M., 10
 teleological approach to possession, 2
 Tertullian, 27
 theater and corporeality, 15–18
 Thiry, Claude, 12–13
 Thomas of Cantimpré, 39, 43, 67, 81, 89

Timaues, 35
Traité de l'art de rhétorique, 10
Traité de rhétorique, 10
 transferential mobility, 91
Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge, A, 16–17
 Trinity, the, 29, 35, 36, 37, 47
 Trotula, 42

U

unconscious kinesthesia, 91

V

Vérard, Antoine, 10
 verbal outbursts, 67–71
 Villon, 10
Vita Christi, 9
 Vital spirit, 33
Vita Remigii, 8
Vita sancti Martini, 8
 vocabularies of possession, 27, 44, 63
 death in, 93–94
 vocality, 18–19, 48, 59–60
 babbling, 72–73
 narrating possession and, 66–67
 solipsistic tones in, 71–76
 verbal outbursts and, 67–71

W

William of Auvergne, 42, 43
 William of Saint Thierry, 33, 34, 35

Z

zone of embodiment of sensation, 96
 Zumthor, Paul, 18, 59–60, 75

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